

Supply—National Defence

—heard full and valuable reports by the military committee, the standing group and the supreme allied commanders on the present state of the forces of the alliance, on the progressive introduction of the most modern weapons and equipment and on the forces needed for NATO defence in the years ahead. They also heard progress reports on projects initiated by the heads of government in December. On the basis of those reports, a most useful discussion took place between the ministers and the NATO military authorities.

Then, they went on to say that they confirmed their support of the basic NATO strategy for the preservation of peace and for the defence of member countries. This defensive strategy continues to be founded on the concept of a strong deterrent comprising the shield, with its conventional and nuclear elements, and the nuclear retaliatory forces. In other words, the requirements that the military commanders felt were necessary were explained to the ministers of defence, and these general proposals were confirmed by the meeting of the heads of government previously. Now, having these general proposals and general requirements confirmed by the heads of government, it seems to me it would not be quite honourable for a country to alter those agreed requirements without informing the other members of the alliance.

This is what I meant in the remarks that I made to the committee of the other place. I had no script, and I cannot remember exactly the words that I used. I did not quote, as I have quoted here, but I thought there might be a question on this subject so I had this final press release brought down this afternoon.

Mr. Pearson: I am glad to have the minister's explanation of this particular report which goes considerably further than he has gone today in his considered statement of the nature of our obligations as a NATO member in respect of the commitment we have accepted. The statement in the press which I have just read says that there must be agreement before a national commitment can be altered. The minister has now said that it would not be honourable, and I agree with him, to alter a commitment of this kind without informing the other members of the council, presumably so that there could be a discussion. As a matter of fact, this is how it has been done in the case of the United Kingdom when they wished to alter the commitment which they had accepted. There was a discussion in the appropriate NATO organ, but that is not the procedure that has always been adopted in all cases in NATO.

However, the minister is also reported as having said in this meeting in the other place that any Russian attack in Europe could be forced to pause by the NATO shield forces

which would use tactical nuclear weapons. I should like to ask him this question, whether he feels that our brigade group equipment in Europe is of a type now which would permit us to play our part in that operation, if it ever had to be undertaken? I am thinking particularly of the Lacrosse surface-to-surface missile of which the minister has spoken and which he says is shortly to be made available to the brigade. Has there been any progress in actually making that missile, which I believe can be used conventionally or in a nuclear way, available to the troops, and is there any other equipment which is required by the brigade to carry out this undertaking which is not now available to the brigade?

Mr. Pearkes: There is money provided in the estimates for the initial procurement of this Lacrosse weapon. It is still undergoing tests, and it is expected that these will have been completed by this September. Our position in connection with the requirements of this Lacrosse is unchanged. We believe it will materially strengthen the powers of resistance of the brigade which is now in Europe.

As other more advanced equipment becomes available I hope we shall take advantage of that and we intend to keep that brigade fully equipped and operational. I have referred already this afternoon to the tests which are being carried out in connection with the personnel carrier, which would be armoured, and I hope that those prove successful.

Mr. Pearson: When the minister says that any Russian attack in Europe could be forced to pause by the NATO shield forces, which would use tactical nuclear weapons, he is referring, I take it, to such weapons in the hands, not of the Canadian brigade at the present time but other components of the shield forces, particularly the United States?

Mr. Pearkes: That is correct; we have no nuclear weapons at the present time.

Mr. Hellyer: Is there any additional equipment which the minister feels the brigade group should have within the next one, two or three years in order to make it more effective in its NATO shield role?

Mr. Pearkes: The brigade is well equipped. If there is any new equipment developed, I hope we will be in a position to acquire it and to place it at the disposal of the brigade. I cannot think at the moment of any equipment which is readily available today which the brigade needs in order to carry out its role, and which it has not got at the present time.

Mr. Pearson: Can the minister tell the committee whether there are non-Canadian personnel on the strength of the brigade group