

Inquiries of the Ministry

press, and confirmed by the statements of General Dare at the External Affairs and National Defence Committee on February 4, that Canada has committed itself to an air transportable brigade group for employment in northern Europe and a battalion group in southern Europe, may I ask the minister when these commitments were made and whether or not they represent any increase in our commitments with respect to reserve air transportable units?

Hon. Leo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I will have to conclude that I am gravely misunderstood, and I will have to refer to *Hansard* of December 18, 1967, page 5519, at which time I said this:

We also confirmed—

I was reporting on the NATO meeting in December.

—the continued availability from Canada for 1968 of (a) our already earmarked naval forces; (b) two brigades retained in Canada and already earmarked for Europe.

And I also stated this:

In respect of our plans after 1968—

That is for 1969, this year.

—we proposed, as forecast in the white paper of 1964, to substitute one air transportable brigade group based in Canada for the two brigades now earmarked in Canada.

This was very clearly an indication that what we called at the time the balance of the division was being reduced from two brigade groups to one brigade group, and this is exactly what I stated yesterday, that we have that commitment to a European NATO mobile force.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister a supplementary question. In view of the Prime Minister's statement that the government was embarking upon a phased reduction of our NATO forces, and in view of the fact that we have a reserve commitment of one air transportable brigade unit and one battalion, does this mean that the government already in its own mind has committed itself to the withdrawal of the brigade now already in Europe?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): I do not necessarily see any such implication, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Subject to the misunderstanding of the minister, Mr. Speaker, I would like to

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

ask him whether he and the Secretary of State for External Affairs stated at Washington that the proposal of the Government of Canada with regard to NATO forces would be decided before the May meeting of the Defence Council of NATO?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I did not make any statement. I had conversations with our colleagues within the alliance. I think what was indicated, and to my understanding what has been indicated even here in Canada, was that negotiations with our allies would begin in May. There are different stages that we have to go through before we confirm these plans at the December meeting, but this process was going to start, and I think we did indicate that it would start at the May meeting.

Mr. Stanfield: I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Is he aware that the Secretary of State for External Affairs said definitely in Washington that these decisions would be taken before the May meeting of the Defence Council of NATO?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stanfield: Then just one further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the Prime Minister secure and make available a transcription of the press briefing made in Washington by the Secretary of State for External Affairs?

Mr. Trudeau: I will ask him to get a copy of the statement for me, Mr. Speaker.

*[Translation]*A.B.M. SYSTEM—USE OF CANADIAN BASES
BY U.S.

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a question to the Minister of National Defence.

Is he in a position today to reply to the question I asked him on March 26 last, that is whether Canada is committed or has agreed to allow the American government to use the Canadian bases located in the Canadian Far North in order to establish an emergency airborne system and whether the government has pledged itself to supply those bases or to allow the United States to use such bases on our territory?