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IMPLICATIONS OF FRENCH NATO POLICY

Statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs on April 4, 1966, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

Article XIII of the North Atlantic Treaty permits signatories to opt out in 1969, the twentieth anniversary of its conclusion. The year 1969, for this good reason, has been regarded as the year for stocktaking. It was with this in mind that, in December 1964, I proposed on behalf of the Canadian Government, at the NATO ministerial meeting, that the North Atlantic Council should undertake a review of the future of the alliance. Although this proposal was approved by the 14 other members of the NATO alliance, nevertheless the idea was not pursued because the President of France had begun to articulate his nation's dissatisfaction with the NATO organization and no one wanted to precipitate a premature confrontation.

It is now less than a month since the French Government first formally informed their NATO allies of their decision to withdraw from the integrated defence arrangements....

My view and that of the Government of Canada is that NATO has served a useful purpose. I take it from the reaction the other day to the Canadian position on the French announcement that this view, generally speaking, reflects the opinion of the political parties in Parliament. We have only to cast our minds back to the immediate postwar period; Europe was then unsteadily extricating itself from the morass left by the Second World War and Stalin was pressing in every way to extend his influence through Western Europe to the Atlantic. The picture has now changed, as President de Gaulle has said. It is not unreasonable to ask: "IS the alliance still necessary? Is General de Gaulle right in advocating the end of the integrated military organization of the alliance? Is the strategic concept of the alliance still valid? Is it time to leave the defence of Europe to the Europeans?" These are questions that are being asked at the present time, and they are fair questions. Naturally, by virtue of my own responsibilities, I have been asking myself some of these questions. It may be helpful if I began what I have to say on the situation in NATO resulting from the French action by summarizing the main elements of the position now taken by our NATO ally, France. These comprise:

(1) a decision to withdraw French forces from NATO's integrated military structure and French officers from the integrated headquarters, these decisions to take effect on July 1, 1966;