

Dear Mike [Pearson],

I sent on Friday a short telegram addressed to yourself and the Under-Secretary (No. 498†). I am sure you will have seen that my purpose was to make sure that Foulkes had told you of the approach made from the Department of Defense to the Canadian Joint Staff on the "use of atomic weapons over Canada in an air defence role". I did not think it useful to attempt to go into the story in detail, or discuss the substance, in a telegram.

I received from Major Williams (in Sparling's absence) a letter of which I attach a copy. It is not clear to me why I was not informed of this matter in January, and the letter seems to imply further that you and Jules [Léger] may not have been told until very recently. This absence of consultation will have to be looked into at some time.

As far as I can see from Williams' letter, the Department of Defense took the proper action in giving to the Joint Staff advance warning of an important approach which would itself obviously have to be made on the government channel. From our point of view in Washington, and perhaps from yours, the way in which the subject has been handled has made futile the obvious efforts of the Americans to enable the Canadian Government to examine the approach before it is made (or perhaps to suggest that it would be wiser not to make it).

You will see from Williams' letter that the Americans are likely to ask first that American units armed with nuclear weapons should be stationed in Canada. They are wise enough to see that this will probably be unacceptable, and are examining a compromise which can be offered only in the event that the Atomic Energy Act is revised.

I doubt if you would feel that the Americans were wrong in their impression that we could not accept the first suggested request. There must be considerable doubt as to whether we could accept the second, although it might be possible to work out some arrangement in due course which would provide that nuclear weapons could be used in the defence of the continent on either side of the boundary.

I would imagine that in whatever form the United States proposal is made it could be answered only after an elaborate study has been made of the future problems of continental defence and the principles on which Canadian-American co-operation are to be built. You will recall that on Feb. 20 we repeated to you (our telegram No. 289 of Feb. 20) the Joint Staff telegram to Ottawa on integration of operational control. I mentioned this subject when I was in Ottawa and found that the Department (Macdonnell) was aware of the consultations taking place on the military level. It had also been decided, I gather, that it would be best not to have political officers associated directly with this process. Any question of the presence in Canada of American forces equipped with atomic weapons would also have to be considered in relation to the "Agreed Minute" of June 14, 1951, which, you will recall, is the basis of the meetings of consultation and of the procedure by which requests to deploy atomic weapons or over-fly Canada with atomic weapons were to be made.

Williams has just told us that he has heard from the Department of Defense that this project has been referred to the White House. Presumably it will be some time before we are approached but, as I pointed out in my telegram, if called in I could do no more than report what was said. I am anxious to have a talk with you about this subject when you are in Washington. The purpose of this letter is to give you whatever information I have and to indicate my concern both with the intended proposal itself and the apparent lack of co-ordination here and in Ottawa.

Yours sincerely,

ARNOLD [HEENEY]