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NATO AND NORTH AMERICAN AIR DEFENCE

Statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs on March 7, 1968, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

...Our defence policy since the Second World War has been based on the conviction that it is in Canada's interest to make a responsible contribution to collective security. Our hope in the immediate postwar period was that our security and that of other nations in the world could be assured by the United Nations, and we regrettably know that this hope has been frustrated. Even though we have been obliged to develop regional arrangements to assure our national security, we continue to regard these arrangements as transitory, essential though they are, I think, for the foreseeable future.

By these arrangements I mean, of course, NATO and, depending on negotiations that have not terminated, NORAD. But we share the hope that the day will come when we can, with confidence, entrust our security to the United Nations.

Meanwhile, we are making efforts to develop to the maximum degree feasible at this time the capacity of the United Nations to keep the peace, and Canada stands ready to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations where conditions are appropriate. I think that our force structure enables us to contribute effectively to future peacekeeping operations, should these be needed.

Now, there are some in Canada who, I know, very sincerely hold the view that Canada should concentrate exclusively on this peacekeeping role. As Minister of External Affairs, I must be realistic and, while I can well sympathize with this aspiration, I cannot agree with it. At the present moment, the United Nations requirement for peacekeeping forces is limited. Our efforts and those of like-minded countries at the United Nations to increase the United Nations' role in the field are, I say, regrettably making slow progress and there are no immediate prospects that the United Nations' peacekeeping capacity or role will be substantially increased. This is not because Canada and some other countries have not tried valiantly over the past three years to seek a more general agreement in the United Nations in this area.