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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;

(2) a decision to require the removal from France of the two integrated military headquarters known as SHAPE and the Central European Command. France has proposed that the removal be completed by April 1, 1967;

(3) a decision to require the withdrawal from France of foreign forces and bases. France has proposed that the United States and Canadian bases be withdrawn by April 1, 1967;

(4) France has indicated a wish to retain its forces in Germany, while transferring them from NATO to French command.

(5) France intends to leave its forces in Berlin, where they are established on the basis of occupation rights and where there is a tripartite command.

(6) France has indicated a willingness to negotiate arrangements for establishing, in peacetime, French liaison missions with NATO commands.

(7) France has indicated a readiness to enter into separate conversations with Canada and the United States to determine the military facilities which the respective governments might mutually grant to each other in wartime.

(8) France intends to remain a party to the North Atlantic Treaty and to participate in the activities of the NATO Council. This, as I understand it, is the position taken by the Government of France.

It is only fair to note that these positions have been previously stated, in one form or another, by the President of the French Republic during the last two years.

This last element of the French position is naturally welcomed by the Canadian Government as an indication of France's desire to continue its formal association with the other parties to the Treaty. It will, I need hardly add, be the concern of the Canadian Government to encourage French participation to the greatest extent feasible.

It is evident that some of the French objectives can be attained by unilateral action; for example, the withdrawal of French troops from SACEUR's command and of French officers from the combined headquarters. Some other objectives will require negotiations over modalities and the timing -- for example, the withdrawal of NATO headquarters and of foreign bases from French territory. Finally, some proposals depend on working out arrangements with other members of the alliance and will involve negotiations on substance -- for example, the presence and role of French troops in Germany and the liaison arrangements which might be established between French and NATO commands.

It must be clear to the members of the Committee that the French proposals raise a host of problems, the range of which has not been fully determined. They raise questions with political, military, financial, and legal implications. We are examining these questions with our allies, informally with the 14 other than France and, where appropriate, with France and the 14. We are, as well, engaged in an examination of the contractual situation, and the documentation in that connection is now being carefully examined by our legal officers.

The first French aide-mémoire also sets out briefly the reasons which, in the view of President de Gaulle, justify the position which he takes. The following arguments are listed:

First, he argues that the threat to Western Europe has changed and no longer has the immediate and menacing character it once had; he says that the countries of Europe have restored their economies and recovered their earlier strength; he argues that France is developing an atomic armament which is not susceptible of being integrated within the NATO forces; that the nuclear stalemate has transformed the conditions of Western defence; and that Europe is no longer the centre of international crises.

These are observations with which I imagine we are all more or less in agreement. But do they, singly or jointly, justify the conclusion drawn by the French Government that integrated defence arrangements are no longer required for the defence of Western Europe?

Let me examine each of the French arguments in turn:

First, the threat to Western Europe. Over the years the Soviet Union has steadily strengthened its military forces in Eastern Germany and in the European area in general. These forces are now stronger than at any time since the end of the Second World War. While I recognize that the likelihood of an actual attack has diminished, the effectiveness of NATO's defence arrangements has been, and remains, a factor in this favourable turn of events. Moreover, it is considered prudent to base defence policy on the known capabilities of a possible enemy rather than on his declared intentions, or even his supposed intentions as we may rightly or wrongly assess them. To avoid any possible misinterpretation, I also want to make clear my conviction that NATO countries should avoid provocation of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, Canada strongly favours the promotion of better understanding between the Soviet Union and the Western countries. But, as the Cuban experience of 1962 demonstrated, progress towards better relations may be greater when it is clear that there is no alternative to accommodation.

Secondly, Europe's recovery. It is, of course, true that the European countries have greatly strengthened their positions in every way. We applaud this development. We know that the generosity of the United States, through the Marshall Plan, greatly contributed to this happy consequence. We have, in fact, been assuming that this would in time enable the Western European states to take on increasing responsibility for European defence, possibly within the framework of new co-operative arrangements among the European members of the alliance. The French action may have set back this prospect, as it has the immediate effect of dividing the countries of Europe over what their defence policies should be.

Thirdly, it is a fact that France has developed an independent nuclear force. But, as we see it, this is not an argument against the integration of other forces. The United Kingdom has demonstrated that the acquisition of a strategic nuclear force does not require the withdrawal of other national forces from the unified command and planning arrangements.

Fourthly, it is true that a nuclear stalemate had developed in place of the earlier United States nuclear monopoly. But this is not new. It has been the case for ten years. Moreover, this fact has not diminished the need for unified planning, if the European countries are to make an effective contribution to the defence of Europe.

Fifthly, I also acknowledge that Europe is not at present the centre of international crises. But, until there is a political settlement in Central Europe, it will remain an area of potential crisis, particularly if the arrangements which have brought about stability in the area should be upset.

In my judgment, and in the judgment of the Canadian Government, the arguments presented in the French aide-mémoire do not support the conclusion that unified command and planning arrangements are no longer necessary for the defence of Western Europe.

It is striking that all of the other members of NATO have joined in reaffirming their belief in the need for unified command and planning arrangements in a declaration, the text of which I communicated to the House of Commons on March 18. I expect members of the External Affairs Committee and the Defence Committee will be interested to know that the strongest support for the integrated military arrangements has come from the smaller members of the alliance, who consider that the only way to assure their defence is by pooling their contributions in a common effort. It seems to me that, if the principle of an alliance is accepted, the experience of the last two world wars and the requirements of modern weapons demonstrate the need for unified command and joint planning. Indeed, one of the most remarkable successes of the postwar world has been the development within NATO of effective peacetime arrangements for military co-operation.

I have explained why we and other members of NATO are not persuaded by the French arguments. I wish now to examine the implications of the actions which have been taken by the French Government.

Providing NATO itself does not disintegrate (and I see no danger of that happening), the immediate military consequences of the French action are thought to be manageable. France has already withdrawn from NATO command, during the last six years, most of its previously integrated forces. The net loss in forces available to NATO from the announced withdrawal, while significant, will not be too serious, particularly if workable arrangements can be devised for maintaining French troops in Germany. But the loss for practical purposes of French land and air space has strategic implications for the defence of Western Europe, which will have to be carefully studied.

Even more worrying to my mind are the possible political implications. These consequences are, of course, still quite uncertain, so that it is possible to speak only in the most general and cautious terms. But it is obvious that the French actions may weaken the unity of the alliance. This would, in turn, jeopardize the stability of Central Europe, which has been built on allied unity and particularly on French, British, and American solidarity in Berlin and in Germany. I do not want to elaborate,

but it is possible to anticipate that French bilateral relations with some of the NATO allies, particularly those who carry the larger burdens, will be put under strain. The balance of forces within the alliance will of necessity be altered. Finally, France's example could stimulate nationalist tendencies which have been encouragingly absent in Western Europe since the last war.

The Canadian Government is not unsympathetic to many of the considerations which underlie the French wish for change. We know that circumstances in the world have changed since NATO was established. We have long believed that members of the alliance, particularly those such as France which have spoken of the need for change, should present concrete proposals to encourage consultation within the alliance.

It is reasonable to look towards a greater acceptance of responsibility by Europeans for the defence of Western Europe. However, any North American move to disengage militarily from Europe will be dangerously premature until the European countries have made the necessary political and institutional arrangements to take over the responsibilities involved. It follows, at this time of uncertainty about NATO's future, that Canada should avoid action which would create unnecessary strain or otherwise impair the solidarity of the alliance. This need not and should not preclude us from making adjustments, in the interest of economy and efficiency, in the manner in which we contribute to European defence. And we should seek to ensure that there is a constructive evolution in the organization of the alliance; and we should take advantage of the actions taken by the Government of France to do exactly what we ourselves proposed in the fall of 1964, which is to engage in serious examination of the state of the alliance.

In so far as the Canadian bases in France are concerned, the Government of France has taken unilateral action. It appears to be a final decision. At any rate, it has stated that it would like to see the Canadian bases withdrawn by April 1, 1967, although I express the hope, and have no doubt, that the French Government will be prepared to negotiate mutually acceptable arrangements, including compensation and dates for the withdrawal of the bases. Since the objective of sending Canadian troops to Europe was to contribute to the integrated defence arrangements from which France is withdrawing, this Government has accepted the logic that Canadian forces in France cannot outstay their welcome. They will have to be moved elsewhere.

I referred earlier to the determination of other members of NATO to preserve the effective arrangements which have been worked out for joint planning and unified command. This is only prudent, and Canada fully shares this determination. This will provide a continuing defence against the Soviet military capacity still directed at Western Europe. It will help preserve the precarious stability in Central Europe. Moreover, under the present integrated defence arrangements, there being no German general staff, Germany has placed all its troops directly under NATO commanders. The dismantling of the existing structure would lead to the reversion of all European forces to national command.

Inevitably, our attention in the near future will be taken up with handling the immediate consequences of the French action. But we shall not lose sight of the need for NATO to adjust to the changing circumstances since the alliance was concluded. Indeed, the adjustments which the French action will require of the existing military arrangements provide opportunities, as I said earlier, which we intend to take to examine with our allies the possibilities for developing improvements in the NATO structure and to consider how the alliance should develop in the long run, and also to consider what reductions and what savings can be effected without impairing the efficiency of the Organization, or of our contribution to it.

Although I am speaking about NATO, I wish to emphasize that--to the extent this depends on Canada--we will not allow our disappointment to affect Canada's bilateral relations with France. The Canadian Government has been working steadily to improve and intensify our relations with France. For our part we will not interrupt this process. Differences over defence policy need not impair the development of our bilateral relations in the political, economic, cultural, and technical fields.

For instance, we are sending an economic mission to France within the course of a few weeks, which will be representative both of government and of business, designed to encourage further trade relations between France and Canada. There certainly will be no interruption between these and other contacts that we have established and continue to establish with France. These are matters which can and should be kept separate from defence arrangements within NATO. In all this, we assume that the French Government agrees that this is a desirable approach, and we have no reason to doubt that this is their view.

I want to conclude this part of my statement by referring again to the objectives which the Canadian Government intends to follow in the situation created by the French action.

In NATO, our policy will be, firstly, to seek, in consultation with our allies, including France as far as possible, to limit the damage to the unity and effectiveness of the alliance, and to recreate a relationship of mutual confidence among all the members; secondly, to help preserve the essential features of NATO's existing system of unified command and joint planning for collective defence; thirdly, to continue to maintain an appropriate contribution to NATO's collective defence system; fourthly, to take every opportunity to examine with our allies possibilities for developing improvements to the NATO structure and to consider the future of the alliance in the long run.

With regard to France, the Government will, firstly, negotiate, either bilaterally or multilaterally as appropriate, fair and reasonable arrangements for those adjustments which may be required as a result of French withdrawal from NATO's integrated defence arrangements; secondly, leave the door open for the eventual return of France to full participation in the collective activities of the alliance, should France so decide. Finally, we will continue, notwithstanding NATO differences and with the co-operation of the French authorities, to develop our bilateral relations with France....