

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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## FRANCE, CANADA AND NATO

Excerpts from a Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the  
Rotary Club, Windsor, Ontario, March 21, 1966.

On March 10 the Canadian Ambassador in Paris was called in to receive a note setting out the position of the French Government regarding France's future participation in NATO. Today I shall summarize the main lines of the French position and give a general indication of the principles which will guide the Canadian Government in the discussions which lie ahead with France and our other allies.

The French note received by Canada states that France intends to withdraw all its remaining land and air forces from NATO commands. Its naval forces had been withdrawn already. France also requires the removal from French territory of all NATO military headquarters, including SHAPE itself. Finally, France requests the withdrawal of foreign forces and installations from France, unless the forces are placed under French operational command, a condition which they themselves recognize is unacceptable.

The implication for Canada is that we shall have to relinquish our air-base at Marville and the Air Division headquarters at Metz and to re-locate these forces and facilities elsewhere. Other Canadian forces in Europe are not directly affected.

I know you will recognize immediately the far-reaching nature of the French decision. I use the word "decision" because the French authorities have made it clear that they are not anticipating counter-proposals. The French Government have, in effect, decided to withdraw from integrated military arrangements within NATO. They are evidently prepared to negotiate only on the modalities and timing for giving effect to the French decision. This will apply to the Canadian bases at Metz and Marville.

We have known from President de Gaulle's press conferences over the last few years and from action which he has already taken to withdraw French naval forces from NATO command that the French Government was dissatisfied with the military arrangements in NATO.

It was for this reason, among others, that the Canadian Government has indicated on numerous occasions that it was ready to consider modifications in the NATO organization which would be acceptable to all members of the alliance. This was our motive in proposing in 1964 that the NATO Council should undertake a study of the future of the alliance. In this way we hoped to start an exchange of views in which France and our other allies could participate and in which plans could be discussed for adapting the alliance to the changed circumstances of the 1960s. Although the proposal was endorsed by the ministerial meeting in December 1964, there was subsequent resistance to the study being developed because it was thought by many of our allies that it might tend to precipitate a confrontation with France. In these circumstances, we were not able to pursue the proposal.

Now France has chosen to act on her own, so that, as matters stand, we have no alternative but to take account of France's unilateral decision and concentrate on limiting the adverse consequences to NATO.

I am bound to say that the Canadian Government regrets the French decision and is not persuaded by the arguments which the French Government has used to justify its actions. Our experience in the last two wars has led us to conclude that there is no effective alternative to unified command and planning arrangements for allied forces. That is even more true of modern warfare, with the emphasis on rapid and dependable communications and on quick, but jointly and carefully considered, responses. The need for continuing these proven arrangements is accepted as imperative by all other members of the alliance. Last week these governments agreed on a declaration of their continuing support for the Organization and you will have read in the press that the text<sup>(1)</sup> was released in Ottawa on March 18.

As you will have gathered from this declaration, the Canadian Government continues to give its full support to the organizational arrangements which have been established over the years in NATO. This does not mean that we think the military organization cannot be improved. Within the conception of unified command and planning, we believe that the military organization would profit from a re-examination aimed at improving its effectiveness and rationalizing the command structure. The readjustment which is imperative as a consequence of the French decision will afford an opportunity to apply the lessons we have learned. This opportunity must be seized.

In spite of its decision to withdraw from the integrated military arrangements of NATO, the French Government has stated that it does not intend to denounce the North Atlantic Treaty in 1969 - that is, that it will continue to be a party to the Treaty. The implications of this intention, in the light of the announced decision to withdraw from the integrated military arrangements, have yet to be explored with the other members of NATO.

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(1) For this text, see SS 66/11.

But the Canadian Government welcomes this indication of France's desire to continue its formal association with the other parties to the Treaty.

The French Government has also indicated a willingness to develop organizational arrangements with other members of NATO to co-ordinate plans in the event of possible conflict. There are serious doubts as to the real effectiveness of such arrangements under the conditions which would be likely to obtain in modern war. Such arrangements could, however, constitute additional links in France's continuing association with the other members of NATO.

One object of Canadian policy will be to ensure that nothing is done which would make more difficult the resumption by France of full military participation in NATO, should France so decide. No matter how great our regret that the French Government should have taken the decision it has, we shall do all we can not to allow this action to affect the existing warm and friendly relations between Canada and France, which form an important and basic element of our foreign policy. Indeed, if the institutional links between France and NATO must be loosened, it is all the more important to maintain and strengthen, if possible, the bilateral relations.

In spite of the uncertainties and the problems which the French action will cause for us and our allies, there are certain essential points about the Canadian position which I should like once more to underline:

- (a) We shall continue to subscribe to the purposes and objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty.
- (b) Canada intends to continue to participate in the integrated military command and planning arrangements, the need for which we discovered at such tragic cost during the last two great wars, and which have become even more important with the increasing complexity and rapidity of military actions and reactions.
- (c) France's decision will require a review of NATO military arrangements. Canada will seize this opportunity for an examination of how we can best contribute to the continuing military effectiveness of the alliance and how the existing arrangements can best be adapted to meet contemporary needs.
- (d) The Canadian Government desires to preserve and strengthen the existing close and friendly relations with France and will do all it can not to allow the French action in NATO to impair our bilateral relations. The Canadian Government also hopes that the French action will not impair France's co-operation with other European and North Atlantic countries in economic, financial, trade, and other matters of great importance to France and to the rest of us.