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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.

Now it is argued sometimes that our role in NATO and NORAD has in some way diminished our acceptability as a peacemaker. In my view, there is no reason to doubt that a continuing role in peace-keeping is compatible with our participation in collective defence arrangements. As a country desiring to make a responsible contribution to the maintenance of peace, it is desirable that we continue to make a contribution to regional defence arrangements genuinely devoted to the maintenance of peace.

The key to our collective defence arrangements is NATO. I recognize that, at this time, when there has been significant improvement in East-West relations and, I believe, hope of still further improvement, there are some who argue that NATO is no longer needed or even that it is a hindrance to the development of improved East-West relations. In my judgment it is a sign of the success of the alliance that we can indulge freely in such speculations.

These are questions that are being asked not only in this country but in most countries of the NATO group. NATO foreign ministers decided, as a result, in December of 1966, to commission a study of the future tasks of the alliance. This was an adaptation of a proposal put forward by Canada in 1964. The study was completed and the results were approved by ministers at the last December ministerial meeting in Brussels. I would like to read several paragraphs from the conclusions of this study, which were agreed to by all members of the alliance:

"The Atlantic alliance has two main functions. Its first is to maintain an adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur. Since its inception, the alliance has successfully fulfilled this task. But the possibility of a crisis cannot be excluded as long as the central political issues in Europe, first and foremost the German question, remain unsolved. Moreover, the situation of instability and uncertainty still precludes a balanced reduction of military forces. Under these conditions, the allies will maintain, as necessary, a suitable military capability to assure the balance of forces, thereby creating a climate of stability, security and confidence.

"In this climate, the alliance can carry out its second function - to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship, in which the underlying political issues can be resolved. Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary. Collective defence is a stabilizing factor in world politics. It is the necessary condition for effective policies directed towards a greater relaxation of tensions. The way to peace and stability in Europe rests, in particular, on the use of the alliance constructively in the interest of détente. The participation of the Soviet Union and the United States will be necessary to achieve a settlement of the political problems in Europe."

I wish to emphasize that this statement was approved by the foreign ministers of all of the 15 countries in NATO. I think this is a convincing demonstration that the 15 members of the Organization are agreed that the alliance is not only a force in maintaining stability in Europe but that it is committed to active involvement in the continued search for peace.

I would report, moreover, that the allies took encouragement from developments in the Soviet world. Here is what they had to say in this study:

"No peaceful order in Europe is possible without a major effort by all concerned. The evolution of Soviet and East European policies gives ground for hope that those governments may eventually come to recognize the advantages to them of collaborating in working towards a peaceful settlement. But no final and stable settlement is possible without a solution of a number of questions, and particularly the German question, which lies at the heart of present tensions in Europe. Any such settlement must end the unnatural barriers between Eastern and Western Europe, which are most clearly and cruelly manifested in the division of Germany.

"Accordingly, the allies are resolved to direct their energies to this purpose by realistic measures designed to further a détente in East-West relations. The relaxation of tensions is not the final goal but is part of a long-term process to promote better relations and to foster a settlement. The ultimate political purpose of the alliance is to achieve a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees."

In these two statements it is clear that there has been a shift of emphasis on the political role of the alliance as an instrument for bringing about détente and a continuing recognition of the importance of the military capacity, particularly, if I may add, in the light of additional military strengths taken on by the Soviet Union in the level of its military appropriations.

Now the study which was initiated by the Foreign Minister of Belgium and from which I have quoted certain excerpts concluded that the alliance continues to be a vigorous Organization which is constantly adapting itself to changing conditions. In our judgment, it has shown its capacity to grow and adapt to the evolution in relations between the countries of Europe and North America, yet it has remained an essential link between Europe and North America. This is a very important consideration for Canada. The alliance has also made it possible for its smaller members to participate effectively in the dialogue with the Soviet Union. And it has provided, until the present, the only effective defence association linking the larger and smaller countries of Western Europe and enabling them to co-operate in a massive defence effort without arousing fears of one another.

For Canada, in particular, the link between North America and Europe which NATO represents, and the consequent involvement in wider Atlantic affairs which it affords, has been beneficial. It has provided an important extra-continental partnership to balance our close bilateral relations with the United States. It has facilitated the development of vastly increased political and

economic relations with the countries of Western Europe, the world's fastest-growing region during the last decade.

Paradoxically, it is Europe's prosperity which has encouraged people in Canada to argue that Canada can now safely withdraw forces from Europe and make our future contribution to NATO from Canada. We must not ignore the relationship between our contribution of forces to the security of Europe and the continuing importance in our national life of maintaining the strongest possible connections with individual European countries. Our military contribution is now relatively much less important than it was when the European nations were weak. But it is still part of the collective effort. It is important not only as a demonstration of our continuing commitment to the alliance but as a contribution to European stability which vitally concerns us, and the preservation of which is vital to the preservation of peace. In this situation, the Government sees no alternative at the present time to Canada's continuing to make an appropriate contribution to NATO's forces in Europe. The acceptance by the countries of Western Europe of our participation in their councils rests essentially on the modest but effective military contribution we make to the security of Europe, which in turn represents an important contribution to our own self defence.

The principal threat to North America, however, now and for the foreseeable future, as I am sure my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, has already explained, comes from the growing Soviet arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Defence against these ICBMs is both technically difficult and enormously expensive, but some progress in missile defence has been achieved in recent years. Members of the Committee will be aware that the United States has recently announced its intention to deploy what it calls a "thin" ABM system directed against China.

The position of the Canadian Government on the proposed missile defence system was stated by the Prime Minister on September 22 at a press conference in these terms, and I quote:

"We have no intention at this time of taking part in any such ABM system."

That is, the "thin" ABM system which was announced by the United States at that time. He went on:

"Naturally, we are keeping the matter under careful review. We do not wish to commit the Government to any particular course of action in the future as to what might be the best solution to the security problem that Canada will face."

While the principal danger to North America comes from the ICBMs, there is also, as the Minister of National Defence has pointed out, a substantial threat from manned bombers. The existing Soviet long-range bomber fleet is not large and it is assumed the number will diminish somewhat over the next decade. But nevertheless it continues to be there, and continues to be a substantial threat. In spite of this diminishing trend, these bombers will continue to pose a serious threat to North America throughout the next decade.

Given this situation, the Government believes it would be irresponsible to ignore such a threat, particularly when it is technically and financially practical to defend against it. For these reasons, the Government will, of course, have to continue to co-operate with the United States in the defence of the continent against bombers.

There are those who would like to think that, by keeping to ourselves, we in Canada could avoid both becoming a target in our own right and being involved in an attack on the United States. Apart from any obligation we might feel to contribute to the defence of North America, this view ignores the fact that Canada is located geographically along the main path which any Soviet - and indeed Chinese - attack against the United States would be likely to follow. Even if there was no intention of attacking Canada, there would always be the possibility that an accident or miscalculation would result in nuclear weapons coming down on Canadian territory, as well as the danger from fall-out resulting from nuclear explosions over targets in the United States.

Apart from this, it is difficult to imagine that in attacking the United States an enemy would allow Canada to remain as a willing - or even unwilling - asylum for the United States population as well as a reservoir of food, arms, electric power and industrial capacity.

We cannot prudently do otherwise than assume that a potential attacker would expect Canada to be sympathetic to the United States and thus likely, in the event (God forbid) of a nuclear attack, to lend assistance if we were capable of doing so. He would never believe he could ignore this possibility, and I think he would be right. Now I must say that my own view is that the dangers of aggressive war are remote (perhaps one could say unlikely), but no government is worthy of the trust given to it by the people of the country which it serves if it does not realistically examine the situation in the world in which it finds itself, and we have had within the last six months at least one situation that must have caused any government to realize that there are some precautions that it must take in its own security interests.

There are, of course, several ways in which Canada could play a useful part in North American air-defence arrangements. One possibility would be for us to provide from our own resources the portion of the continental air-defence system which needs to be located in Canada. This would be a very large portion of the whole and would necessitate an outlay of financial and personal resources which we believe to be beyond our capacity.

Another possibility would be to leave the entire burden for North American bomber defence to the United States, but give them unlimited access to Canadian air-space and Canadian bases for both training and operational purposes. This would keep the cost to Canada to a minimum but it would tend to erode our sovereignty as well as any influence we could otherwise have on the development of air-defence policies - policies which would inevitably have a significant impact on us.

A third possibility is to share the task of North American bomber defence with the United States on an appropriate basis. This co-operative approach is the one which has been followed in all our defence relations with the United States since the beginning of the Second World War, and, in the view

of the Government, is the one which makes the most sense as far as continental air defence is concerned, given the disadvantages of the other alternatives.

I would just like to say by way of parenthesis at this point that the arrangements for continental defence made between the Government of Canada through the Department of National Defence and its opposite number in the Government of the United States are not part of the NORAD structure. The NORAD structure does not involve a commitment of Canadian resources. It involves simply participation in a common command structure and in the planning process.

To preserve basic Canadian interests while participating in joint defence activities with a partner as powerful as the United States, it has been necessary to develop certain principles to govern our approach to specific problems. Over the years there has been mutual understanding that co-operative defence projects in either country should:

- (a) be agreed to by both Governments;
- (b) confer no permanent rights or status upon either country and should be without prejudice to the sovereignty of either country;
- (c) be without impairment to the control of either country over all activities in its territory.

In addition to these three principles, it has been found that, for a variety of reasons, the actual provision of the necessary manpower and equipment can best be handled through individual national contributions made on an ad hoc basis as requirements are defined.

Of course, if forces from the two countries are to be employed, it is essential to have satisfactory arrangements to ensure that they can be effectively utilized in time of need. One way of doing this is to co-ordinate respective national command and control elements. This formula was employed in the North American air-defence field prior to 1958 but it was found to be inadequate in circumstances where an immediate reaction to minimum warning of attack is essential.

If co-operation between the air-defence forces of both countries is to be effective, it is necessary to have a single air-defence plan, previously approved by the national authorities of the two countries, and an integrated command and control system. For the past ten years these requirements have been satisfactorily met by NORAD. We ourselves are now in the process of negotiation and consideration of this matter.

One of the major advantages of the NORAD arrangement, which was entered into by the previous Administration in the summer of 1958, apart from making the most effective use of the available air-defence forces of both countries, has been the opportunity it has provided for Canada to play a role in the formulation of continental air-defence policy. Canada has provided the Deputy Commander in Chief and senior operations officers in the NORAD headquarters,

as well as the Commander of the Northern NORAD Region and the Commanders of two NORAD divisions, including one in the United States. Plans are jointly drawn up by officers of the two countries and must be approved by both Canadian and United States authorities. United States thinking naturally plays a major part, but it is not by any means exclusive. The authority of the Commander in Chief NORAD in all respects is jointly determined by the two Governments. It is also perhaps worth noting again that the NORAD system is exclusively defensive in nature and cannot possibly be used for any purpose apart from the defence of North America.

The NORAD Agreement will lapse on May 12 unless it is renewed. The Government is currently, as I said a moment ago, giving careful consideration to this Agreement.

To the United States, partnership for the defence of our respective homelands is an important manifestation of the basic friendship between the two countries, which enables us to speak frankly and to differ with the United States in other areas where such vital interests are not at stake. If we are seen to be doing our part in the defence of this continent, we are in a stronger position to express our views on other issues where we may disagree. In summary, I would like to make the following points. Canada is involved in a threat to this continent from manned bombers which no responsible government can ignore. In this situation, there are three choices open to us:

(a) We could accept responsibility for providing all of the facilities and undertake all of the activities required in Canada for effective continental bomber defence. In our judgment this is beyond the financial capacity of this country.

(b) We could permit the United States to assume controlling responsibility for the entire task both in the United States and Canada. This would involve a surrender of sovereignty which this Government is not prepared to contemplate.

(c) We can share the task of continental defence on an appropriate basis.

This third choice provides for effective defence within our means, while fully protecting Canadian sovereignty. The NORAD arrangement is based on the principle of shared responsibility for continental air defence, but by itself renewal of the Agreement would not be a commitment of specific forces and equipment.

As I said earlier:

"This is achieved through ad hoc arrangements between the two Governments as the need arises."

Based upon what I would think anyone would agree to was an elementary principle - namely, that in our own defence interests we have to have arrangements made with our neighbour for continental defence and the defence of our own country.