



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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NATO AND NORTH AMERICAN DEFENCE

An address by Mr. George R. Pearkes, V.C., Minister of National Defence, Canada, to the 19th Annual Awards Dinner of the Overseas Press Club of America, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, Tuesday, April 29, 1958.

I am honoured to have the privilege of addressing you tonight not only because I understand that I am the first Canadian to be given this privilege, but also because I realize the important part the members of the Overseas Press Club of America play in creating an informed public opinion.

Last week I returned from Europe where I attended the meeting of the Defence Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Tonight I am going to talk to you about NATO with particular reference to the significant role played in this alliance by our joint defence of the North American Continent.

The discussions that were held in Paris made it clear that the defence thinking of NATO has not remained static but rather that it has steadily progressed over the years.

In particular, there is the changed concept of the type and formation of forces required, the realization of the necessity of pooling our resources and the growing knowledge that the threat to the member nations of NATO is not confined to the NATO area.

NATO came into being in 1949 as a result of alarm, if not fear, existing amongst the Western Nations following Communist absorption of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It became clear that collective security was the only way to ensure continued freedom.

In those early days of the alliance, efforts in the military field were directed towards raising conventional forces that could withstand a Soviet attack until reinforcements would arrive. But the force requirements deemed necessary by the

military proved quite unrealistic in the light of the political and economic capabilities of the countries involved. At the meeting of the NATO Council in Lisbon in 1952 an attempt was made to adjust the minimum requirements for conventional forces to the capabilities of the member nations but, as you know, these force requirements were never achieved.

The increasing cost of new equipment made it apparent that the Lisbon goals were beyond the reach of NATO countries. In 1954, with the prospects of tactical nuclear weapons and increasing German participation, it was thought feasible to reduce the shield forces objectives to a more manageable and attainable size. The realization that in all probability there would be no time in the initial stages for reinforcements pointed to the necessity for highly trained shield forces - ready and in position.

Complementing the shield, we have the sword consisting of the retaliatory forces of your Strategic Air Command augmented by the United Kingdom Bomber Command. At first the United States possessed a great superiority in the power of the sword. Our strategy was for our shield forces to hold off an attack until our retaliatory forces could be brought into effect. However, since then the Soviet Union has developed, with great success, its own nuclear bombs, with the capacity to deliver them, and we now know that the use of such weapons by either side would result in the utmost devastation.

The shield and the sword remain inseparable but we realized in Paris that in view of the consequences resultant upon the use of the sword the effectiveness of our shield forces acquires added importance.

Theoretically, these shield forces could be built up to match the Russians in conventional arms. This, however, would involve a strain on the economy that could lead to a lowering of living standards which in turn might encourage the growth within NATO countries of the very thing we are out of fight - Communism.

Viewed in this light, the Defence Ministers of NATO have agreed, in principle, that our shield force goals should be retained at approximately their present numerical strength but that, in addition, conventional arms require to be augmented with tactical nuclear weapons.

It is imperative that our shield forces be of such strength that they will be able to ascertain whether an attack is merely a probing effort or the advance guard of an all-out onslaught. Without a strong shield the Soviet might try, perhaps employing the forces of one of its satellites, to eat up Europe bit by bit, hoping no one foray is considered important enough to start World War III. Under such circumstances the

West might be tempted to launch prematurely its forces of retaliation.

To ensure the continued strength of the shield it is mandatory that we on this continent contribute forces to that shield. The presence of Canadian and American forces in Europe not only adds to the effectiveness of the shield, but also illustrates to our European partners the importance we attach to the defence of their territories. It is an indication that we do not intend to rely solely upon the nuclear retaliatory capacity of the sword.

To help meet the continuing needs of our allies, we in Canada make what is for us another fairly substantial contribution through our programme of Mutual Aid.

I would like to emphasize that Canada is not a recipient under this programme. On the contrary, we have contributed, since the inception of NATO, assistance in excess of one billion dollars. True, the contribution we have made - and are continuing to make - may not be large when compared to your own extremely generous programme - I believe you call it Mutual Defense Assistance - but we feel that it has been of some significance in the build-up of the strength of the alliance.

The increased complexity and cost of modern weapons makes it more necessary than ever before that duplication of research and production be avoided. Already some progress has been made in the standardization of arms.

At the NATO Defence Ministers' Conference, a resolution was adopted favouring closer collaboration between any group of nations in NATO, such as the Western European Union, in defence research development and production. Much remains to be done but if we are to have an efficient defence within our economic limits, such joint efforts must increase in the days ahead.

As long as NATO remains strong and is resolved to make use of all weapons - both conventional and nuclear - in the face of aggression there would appear little chance of an attack against the NATO area. The success of NATO is indicated not only by Russia's insistence on its disbandment, but also by the fact that she has had to turn elsewhere to try to extend her influence. This was recognized at the NATO meeting in Paris. While the organization is a regional defence alliance, we realize that the threat of aggression, political and economic infiltration or exploitation by the Communists in any part of the world is a threat to all of us. Therefore, other regional defence alliances such as SEATO and the Baghdad Pact play an important military role. And, in the

economic and political fields every effort must continue to be made to prevent any country falling under Russian influence.

I referred earlier to the evolution of defence thinking within NATO. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the present realization that the North American Continent is part of the NATO area and that its defence is of vital importance. There is now common agreement that the protection of the Strategic Air Command and of the vast production facilities both in Canada and the United States is of paramount urgency to NATO.

We, on this continent, long ago realized that there is no such thing as a unilateral defence. This is particularly evident with respect to the possibility of an air attack. In recent years we have jointly constructed an extensive air defence system comprising early warning radar lines backed up by interceptor fighter squadrons.

In Canada, we have accepted the presence of your servicemen at our operational stations and your country has in turn welcomed our personnel from our armed forces for training and other duties.

Minor differences of opinion may arise in our relationship but as long as there is mutual respect of our individual rights, such differences will be overcome. The border between the United States and Canada is undefended but there is a border and we are an independent country, bound it is true by many ties to your country but still capable of individual action and of determining our own policy.

Another step was taken towards increasing the effectiveness of our defence when, last August, a joint statement was issued by your former Secretary of Defense and myself announcing the interim creation of an integrated air defence system, known as NORAD.

I have found that there has been some misunderstanding regarding the function of the North American Air Defence Command.

The joint responsibility of Canada and the United States in the defence of the North American Continent was given further emphasis when studies were initiated in 1955 toward the creation of a more effective air defence system for this region of NATO. These studies later resulted in the recommendation for an integrated operational control of all air defence forces under one joint headquarters. Following the approval of this recommendation in principle by both governments, the integrated headquarters known as NORAD, with a United States Commander and a Canadian Deputy Commander, was formally established at Colorado Springs on August 1 of last year.

This command will be responsible for the development of plans and procedures that would be followed in war and these plans will be immediately implemented in such an emergency. It will also be responsible for the general pattern of training and the supervision of practice exercises in order to ensure the readiness of our forces if hostilities should ever break out. In the event that we are attacked, NORAD will direct the air defence operations in accordance with the plans which have already been accepted for such a contingency.

I would emphasize that the Commander-in-Chief of NORAD reports directly to the United States joint Chiefs-of-Staff and the Canadian Chiefs-of-Staff Committee. All plans must be approved by the Chiefs-of-Staff and where necessary by the governments of both our countries.

This further integration of the air defence of our two countries has raised certain problems, particularly in regard to situations that might lead to a major war.

It is my view that as we are now bound together in the defence of this region of NATO, we must be jointly concerned with any policy which may invoke an attack on us. Therefore, I believe that the acceptance of this joint responsibility of the defence of North America requires the closest continuous exchange of views on all major issues in which there is a risk of force being used against the North American Continent.

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