



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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A DEFENCE POLICY FOR CANADA

Statement to the Press by Prime Minister
Pierre Elliott Trudeau on April 3, 1969.

A Canadian defence policy, employing in an effective fashion the highly skilled and professional Canadian Armed Forces, will contribute to the maintenance of world peace. It will also add to our own sense of purpose as a nation and give renewed enthusiasm and a feeling of direction to the members of the armed forces. It will provide the key to the flexible employment of Canadian forces in a way which will permit them to make their best contribution in accordance with Canada's particular needs and requirements.

The Government has rejected any suggestion that Canada assume a non-aligned or neutral role in world affairs. Such an option would have meant the withdrawal by Canada from its present alliances and the termination of all co-operative military arrangements with other countries. We have decided in this fashion because we think it necessary and wise to continue to participate in an appropriate way in collective security arrangements with other states in the interests of Canada's national security and in defence of the values we share with our friends.

Canada requires armed forces within Canada in order to carry out a wide range of activities involving the defence of the country, and also supplementing the civil authorities and contributing to national development. Properly equipped and deployed, our forces will provide an effective multi-purpose maritime coastal shield and they will carry out operations necessary for the defence of North American airspace in co-operation with the United States. Abroad, our forces will be capable of playing important roles in collective security and in peace-keeping activities.

The structure, equipment and training of our forces must be compatible with these roles, and it is the intention of the Government that they shall be. Our eventual forces will be highly mobile and will be the best-equipped and best-trained forces of their kind in the world.

The precise military role which we shall endeavour to assume in these collective arrangements will be a matter for discussion and consultation with our allies, and will depend in part on the role assigned to Canadian forces in the surveillance of our own territory and coast-lines in the interests of protecting our own sovereignty. As a responsible member of the international community, it is our desire to have forces available for peacekeeping roles as well as for participation in defensive alliances.

Canada is a partner in two collective defence arrangements, which, though distinct, are complementary. These are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the North American Air Defence Command. For 20 years NATO has contributed to the maintenance of world peace through its stabilizing influence in Europe. NATO continues to contribute to peace by reducing the likelihood of a major conflict breaking out in Europe, where, because the vital interests of the two major powers are involved, any outbreak of hostilities could easily escalate into a war of world proportions. At the same time, it is the declared aim of NATO to foster improvements in East-West relations.

NATO itself is continuously reassessing the role it plays in the light of changing world conditions. Perhaps the major development affecting NATO in Europe since the Organization was founded is the magnificent recovery of the economic strength of Western Europe. There has been a very great change in the ability of European countries themselves to provide necessary conventional defence forces and armaments to be deployed by the alliance in Europe.

It was, therefore, in our view entirely appropriate for Canada to review and re-examine the necessity in present circumstances for maintaining Canadian forces in Western Europe. Canadian forces are now committed to NATO until the end of the present year. The Canadian force commitment for deployment with NATO in Europe beyond this period will be discussed with our allies at the meeting of the Defence Planning Committee of NATO in May. The Canadian Government intends, in consultation with Canada's allies, to take early steps to bring about a planned and phased reduction of the size of the Canadian forces in Europe.

We intend, as well, to continue to co-operate effectively with the United States in the defence of North America. We shall, accordingly, seek early occasions for detailed discussions with the United States Government of the whole range of problems involved in our mutual co-operation in defence matters on this continent. To the extent that it is feasible, we shall endeavour to have those activities within Canada which are essential to North American defence performed by Canadian forces.

In summary, Canada will continue to be a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to co-operate closely with the United States within NORAD and in other ways in defensive arrangements. We shall maintain appropriate defence forces, which will be designed to undertake the following roles:

- (a) the surveillance of our own territory and coast-lines - i.e., the protection of our sovereignty;
- (b) the defence of North America in co-operation with United States forces;
- (c) the fulfilment of such NATO commitments as may be agreed upon; and
- (d) the performance of such international peacekeeping roles as we may, from time to time, assume.

The kind of forces and armaments most suitable for these roles is now being assessed in greater detail in preparation for discussion with our allies.