CABINET

ATLANTIC NUCLEAR FORCE

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

I attach, for the information of my colleagues, a paper describing our proposal to establish an Atlantic Nuclear Force (A.N.F.).

M. S.

Foreign Office, S.W.1,

OUTLINE OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL

Objectives

In proposing a reorganisation of the nuclear arrangements of the Atlantic Alliance Her Majesty's Government have the following objectives:

(a) We want a solution which will foster the strength and unity of the alliance as a whole by taking account of the position of those non-nuclear members who want to exercise greater influence on nuclear planning, policy and strategy. In particular we want as far as possible to take account of the political and military requirements of Germany.

(b) As far as possible the nuclear forces committed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) should be united under a single unified control system, forming an integral part of the defence structure of the alliance as a whole. The control system should be closely linked with NATO, though not in such a way as to enable members of NATO not taking part in the force to exercise a veto on it. It should also be open-ended and allow for new participants to join, particularly France if she does not join from the start.

(c) In addition we want to promote increasing consultation within the alliance on the policy of the Western Powers with regard to nuclear weapons in any part of the world.

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Although the present nuclear Powers are committed to consult the North Atlantic Council if time permits before they use nuclear weapons anywhere, there is no continuous consultation about deployment of nuclear weapons or situations which might require their use. The European countries however have almost as great an interest in the use of the United States strategic nuclear forces as in nuclear forces committed to NATO.

Proposal

2. Her Majesty's Government would like to propose that to meet these objectives an Atlantic Nuclear Force (A.N.F.) should be established with the following components:

(a) The British V-bomber force, except for those aircraft which are needed for existing commitments (primarily conventional, but, in certain circumstances, nuclear) outside the NATO area; and a British fleet of Polaris submarines when available.

(b) At least an equal number of United States Polaris submarines; and possibly some Minuteman missiles in the United States.

(c) Some kind of mixed-manned and jointly-owned element or elements in which the existing non-nuclear Powers could take part.

(d) Any forces which France may decide to subscribe.

3. The inclusion of a mixed-manned element would allow the non-nuclear countries to take part in a meaningful way. This would leave open the possibility that some weapon systems, e.g., bombers or Minuteman missiles, provided from national sources, could be mixed-manned and possibly included in the mixed-manned element itself.

4. The elements contributed to the A.N.F. by individual countries would be committed to it for as long as NATO continued to exist. All elements, whether contributed from national resources or mixed-manned, should be collectively owned.

5. The whole Force would be under a single Authority on which all countries taking part in the Force would be entitled to be represented. All members of the Authority would have equal rights, without any discrimination between them, over all elements in the Force. Thus, any country contributing elements from its national resources and any country participating in the mixed-manned element would be equally entitled to exercise a veto over the use of the entire Force and over any changes which might at any time be proposed in the control system. This does not exclude the possibility that provision could be made for the control arrangements to be reviewed later, for example if the major nations of Europe achieve full political unity, in such a way as to enable the European vote to be cast as one. The European unit exercising a single European vote would have the same veto rights as individual Governments taking part in the Force.
6. The Authority would consist of the Permanent Representatives to NATO of the countries concerned and would be located at NATO Headquarters. Since the President of the United States would be retaining control of the bulk of the nuclear weapons capable of being used in the defence of NATO, it is for consideration whether the Ambassadors at Washington of the countries concerned should also be formed into a special consultative committee through which the President could obtain advice in an emergency. In addition to this permanent machinery, there would be advantage in periodic meetings of Ministers of Defence to consider such things as targeting policy, nuclear weapons developments, nuclear dispersal plans, and future force structure.

7. The functions of the Authority, who would act on instructions from Governments, would be:

(a) To provide the Force Commander with political guidance.
(b) To approve the Force Commander’s targeting and operational plans for the use of all weapons of the Force, which should be drawn up in close consultation with the Strategic Air Command at Omaha.
(c) To take the decision to release nuclear weapons to the Force Commander and to authorise him to execute agreed plans for their use.
(d) To develop doctrine on the role of all types of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.
(e) To consult and discuss possible contingencies anywhere in the world which might give rise to the possibility of nuclear weapons being used, while ensuring that the views of all interested allies are taken into account in drawing up whatever unified plans may be necessary to meet these contingencies.

8. The targeting of the A.N.F. would be co-ordinated with the targeting of all United States forces in the Atlantic area, i.e., there should be close co-ordination between the targeting of weapons primarily intended for the defence of Europe and strategic weapons in the United States, whether or not their primary purpose is Atlantic defence.

Non-dissemination

9. In order to ensure that the new arrangements could not result in, or be accused of leading to, dissemination of nuclear weapons, it would be desirable to incorporate in the Charter of the Force clauses whereby the nuclear members would undertake not to disseminate nuclear weapons and the non-nuclear members would undertake not to acquire them or control over them. Moreover, in order to comply with the principles of non-dissemination, there should be a prohibition on nuclear weapons passing into the ownership or control not only of individual non-nuclear countries but also of a group of such countries. A suggested text of a passage on these lines for inclusion in the Charter of the Force is at Annex to this paper.
British contribution

10. We are prepared to commit immediately to the A.N.F. eight V-bomber squadrons (64 aircraft). Over the period 1968–70 these will be replaced by the British fleet of Polaris submarines. We are prepared to contemplate mixed-manning within those V-bomber squadrons which are fully committed to the A.N.F.

11. We are proposing that there should be at least an equal number of United States Polaris submarines in the Force, so that we are in practice thinking of a combined fleet of either six or eight boats, with a total armament of 96 or 128 missiles.

Mixed-manned component

12. We accept that the mixed-manned element is the only way in which the existing non-nuclear countries can be enabled to take part as members of the Authority in ownership and manning of nuclear weapons systems within the Force, without transgressing the principles of non-dissemination. We recognise that the United States will have to take part in the mixed-manned element in order to make its composition consistent with the principles of non-dissemination. But for our part we should not wish to contribute to a surface ship component over and above our contribution to the Force from British national resources; we could however consider contributing to a land-based component based on weapons already existing or programmed.

13. The creation of a new strategic force of surface ships armed with Polaris weapons is the least desirable way of applying the mixed-manned principle.

14. The strategic forces available to the alliance are already adequate for the purpose of deterring Soviet aggression. The missile ship force could only be used in the context of the general strategic exchange when all the other strategic forces available in support of the alliance were also committed; it would thus be superfluous to the requirements of the alliance. It would also unnecessarily increase the number of nuclear weapons to the possible detriment of East-West relations; it would add to the risks of incidents at sea, and it would increase the total financial and manpower burden of the alliance.

15. In our view, therefore, the mixed-manned element of the A.N.F. should consist of existing or already planned weapons systems. Our first choice would be existing Minuteman missiles on United States soil. These are strategic missiles in the purest sense and therefore particularly appropriate to the kind of A.N.F. being proposed. The joint ownership of a force of such weapons based in the United States would epitomise the American-European link; it would not (as with the seaborne force) mean creating a new force in a new environment and would thus have attractions vis-à-vis the manpower and financial aspects and in the context of arms control discussions, since it would not, in effect, be adding to the overall missile potential of the West. If such a concept would present insuperable difficulties to the United States Government, then we
should like consideration to be given to land-based aircraft and missiles in Europe on the lines of the British proposals put forward during last year. We realise, however, that the inclusion of tactical interdiction weapons of this kind would have implications for the character of the Force and the command arrangements appropriate to it.

Permissive action links

16. In the event of the alliance, and thus the Force, coming to an end, submarines and bombers and their related missiles and warheads would revert to the national ownership of the country which had originally contributed them. Missiles and warheads in the mixed-manned element would also be returned to the supplying country. Permissive action links designed to make operational command more effective could be installed in all elements of the Force, provided they did not prevent this reversion to national control if the alliance came to an end.

Command arrangements and relations with NATO

17. There are two solutions to the Command problem—to place the A.N.F. with its own Commander under SACEUR or under a new and separate NATO command.

18. SACEUR is a theatre Commander whose primary task is to conduct the tactical land-air battle for the defence of Europe. This, by itself, is a very substantial responsibility for one Commander to exercise and there are strong arguments against giving him the added responsibility for conducting a strategic offensive against the Soviet Union and targets far removed from the immediate battle area. On the other hand, we recognise that SACEUR has a special position in the eyes of European countries as the Commander directly interested in the defence of the European theatre and that these countries would be reluctant to see his role weakened in any way and would prefer to see any new force placed at his disposal.

19. The alternative is to place the Force, together with its own Commander, under a separate NATO Commander. The appointment of a new NATO Commander, especially if he were a Supreme Commander, would emphasise the importance of the A.N.F. and the new departure which it would represent. It might also serve to emphasise the desirability of co-ordinating the policies of the A.N.F. with those of the external strategic forces. Our preference is therefore for the assignment of the Force, with the Force Commander, to a new NATO Supreme Commander. The Force Commander, while subordinate to the new Supreme Commander for NATO purposes, would also remain responsible to the Authority of the A.N.F. and would obey the Authority’s instructions. The exact terms of the assignment of the Force to NATO command would need to be worked out.

20. The Force would be collectively owned by the participating countries and countries contributing forces to it would give up title over them to the Force collectively. The owners would then assign
the Force to NATO similarly to the way in which a member country assigns forces to NATO, for co-ordination with the other forces available to the Alliance, in accordance with the approved strategy and operating procedures of NATO. This would be essential because even if hostilities started with a conventional exchange, the possibility of direct escalation from conventional weapons through tactical nuclear weapons to strategic nuclear weapons must be presented to the enemy as an effective deterrent. At the same time, however, we must reckon with the possibility that the normal functioning of NATO might be inhibited by lack of co-operation on the part of one or more of its members, or indeed by an attempt to veto recourse to force. The existence of this possibility would detract from the credibility of the Force as a deterrent if it was irrevocably assigned to NATO. To guard against this, therefore, the owners of the Force must collectively retain the ability in the last resort to exercise control of the Force without the possibility of an effective veto by non-participants and so to instruct the Force Commander.

Finance

21. The question arises of financing the capital and operating costs of the Force as a whole. This is something on which further discussion will be needed. It can more appropriately be discussed when the size and shape of the Force is more precisely known.

Annex

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In furtherance of the purposes underlying Resolution 1665 (XVI) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 4th of December, 1961, and with a view to facilitating agreement on general and complete disarmament under effective international control, those Governments who already manufacture and own nuclear weapons solemnly declare as follows:

(a) they will not transfer any nuclear weapons directly or indirectly, either through the organisation created by the present agreement or by any other means,
   (i) either into the national ownership or control of States not now possessing such weapons, or
   (ii) into the ownership or control of any association of which they are not members or in which power to prevent the use of such weapons is not retained by all of them;
(b) they will not assist such States individually or collectively in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or transmit to them information necessary for their manufacture.

2. To the ends set out in the foregoing paragraph the other Governments parties to this agreement solemnly declare as follows:

(a) they will not, individually or collectively, manufacture nuclear weapons.
(b) they will not, directly or indirectly, either through the organisation created by the present agreement or by any other means, acquire national ownership or control of any such weapons;

(c) they will not bring any nuclear weapons into the ownership or control of any association of which those Governments who already manufacture and own nuclear weapons are not members, or in which power to prevent the use of such weapons is not retained by all those Governments;

(d) they will not individually or collectively seek or obtain from other States information necessary for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.