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NATO NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The NATO Nuclear Planning Group met in Ministerial session in The Hague on 13th and 14th November, 1979. This twenty-sixth half-yearly meeting was attended by the following Ministers of Defence: Mr. José Desmarets, Belgium; Mr. Allan McKinnon, Canada; Mr. Poul SØgaard, Denmark; Dr. Hans Apel, Federal Republic of Germany; Mr. Attilio Ruffini, Italy; Mr. Willem Scholten, the Netherlands; Mr. Thorvald Stoltenberg, Norway; Mr. Francis Pym, the United Kingdom; and Dr. Harold Brown, the United States. Greece and Turkey were represented by their respective Permanent Representatives to NATO, Mr. Nicolas Athanassiou and Mr. Osman Olcay. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Joseph M.A.H. Luns, Secretary General of NATO. Also present were the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee and the Major NATO Commanders.

After the briefing by the United States on current developments in United States nuclear forces, Ministers discussed the nuclear threat and its implications for NATO's security. They reiterated their support for early ratification of SALT II.

Ministers, recalling that the Soviet Union had achieved approximate parity with the strategic forces of the United States discussed the implications of Soviet strategic developments. They recognized that, as a consequence of the achievement of such parity, disparities in theatre nuclear forces became especially significant to the overall balance of nuclear forces. They recalled that many of NATO's theatre

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nuclear forces, particularly those of longer range, are vulnerable and, in some cases, ageing systems while the Soviet Union had continued to build-up and improve its theatre nuclear systems. In the light of these factors, a gap in long-range theatre nuclear force capabilities already exists and is steadily widening. Accordingly, Ministers reaffirmed the need for modernization of NATO's theatre nuclear forces. They also reaffirmed the need for arms control to be pursued in parallel.

Ministers agreed that recent Soviet statements on nuclear trends in Europe should not be allowed to obscure the disturbing growth in the Soviet long-range theatre nuclear capability and the increasing nuclear threat to the Alliance. They considered that the introduction of the SS-20 missile and BACKFIRE bomber was a cause of particular concern. They recalled that, although the overall number of Soviet missile launchers targetable on NATO Europe has been slightly reduced in recent years, the deployment of the SS-20 with its three Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) had led to a substantial increase in the number of Soviet warheads now capable of striking the whole of NATO Europe. They noted that the SS-20 has twice the range of most of the missiles it is replacing and could be targeted on Europe from well outside the Western areas of the Soviet Union; that it is considerably more accurate than the earlier systems and therefore poses a more serious threat to the West; and that its mobility greatly increases its survivability. Ministers noted that the BACKFIRE bomber has a much greater range and can carry more weapons than earlier Soviet medium-range bombers; and that its sophisticated electronics and ability to fly fast at low altitude increase its capability to penetrate air defences.

Against this background Ministers considered the urgent requirement for modernizing NATO theatre nuclear forces as part of the Long Term Defence Programme and the parallel need for related arms control measures. In this context, Ministers noted that the modernization of theatre nuclear systems would, by adding highly accurate and survivable, long-range systems based in NATO Europe, enhance NATO's deterrent and strengthen the linkage between NATO's conventional forces and United States intercontinental strategic systems; and by augmenting NATO long-range theatre nuclear forces, close a gap in the spectrum of escalation and provide increased options for restrained and controlled responses. An upward adjustment in long-range theatre nuclear forces would minimize the risk that the Soviets might believe - however incorrectly - that they could use long-range forces to make or threaten limited strikes against NATO Europe from locations deep in the Soviet Union. Ministers agreed that conventional force requirements should continue to take priority in force planning and that there would be no question of NATO increasing its reliance on nuclear weapons or of lowering the nuclear threshold.

In preparing for decisions to be taken in December, Ministers agreed that the reports of the High Level Group on modernization of long-range theatre nuclear forces and the Special Group on Arms Control should be the basis for discussion and decision in December, taking into account their deliberations during this meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group. As envisaged, no decisions were taken. Ministers reaffirmed that modernization and arms control negotiations involving long-range theatre nuclear forces should be complementary ways of achieving the fundamental aim of maintaining and improving Alliance security and of enhancing overall stability and détente. In this context, Ministers welcomed the constructive preparations of arms control proposals designed to engage the Soviet Union in negotiations aimed at reducing the disparity in the level of nuclear forces, thus furthering the maintenance of peace with undiminished security. In addition, Ministers took note of the possibility that NATO adjust the overall theatre nuclear force stockpile in Europe by withdrawing some substantial number of warheads as an integral accompaniment of a long-range theatre nuclear force modernization programme. They agreed that this should be further considered.

After reviewing the future work programme of the Nuclear Planning Group, Ministers accepted with pleasure an invitation by the Norwegian Minister of Defence to hold their next meeting in Norway in the Spring of 1980.