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OTAN/NATO, 1110 Bruxelles ■ Téléphone : 41.00.40 - 41.44.00 - 41.44.90

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FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The Defence Planning Committee of NATO met in Ministerial Session on 7th December, 1973 in Brussels.

2. The Defence Ministers of countries represented in the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee - Belgium, Canada, Denmark(1), Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States - met first to review the Nuclear Planning Group's activities during 1973 and plans for future work.

3. All Ministers then met as the Defence Planning Committee. They first discussed the strategic situation as it affects the Alliance in the light of an appraisal by the Secretary General and heard a statement by the Chairman of the Military Committee on current trends in the military situation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

4. Ministers took note of developments in the second phase of the United States/Soviet talks on the limitation of strategic weapons. They discussed the security aspects of the Conference on European Security and Co-operation now taking place in Geneva. They welcomed the opening of negotiations in Vienna on mutual and balanced force reductions in Central Europe; they also reiterated that the aim of negotiations in Vienna should be to achieve a more stable balance, consistent with the criterion of undiminished security for all members of the Alliance, at lower levels of forces; they confirmed that the overall military capability of NATO should not be reduced except in this context.

5. Ministers noted with concern that, despite these developments in the political field, the Soviet Union and her Allies have continued to increase the scale of their military programme and to strengthen and improve their forces in every field. There is no indication that this trend will be reversed. The Soviet Union now possesses a capability for the world-wide use of military power well in excess of that needed to defend their own territory. Ministers emphasized that the planning of NATO defences must be directly related to the still growing

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(1) Represented by the Permanent Representative of Denmark to NATO

power of the Warsaw Pact and the strategic situation created thereby. The Ministers recognized the responsibility of their Governments to assure public understanding of the facts bearing on the military power of the Warsaw Pact and of the need for undiminished defence efforts on the part of their nations.

6. Ministers discussed recent events in the Middle East and their implications for the security of the Alliance. Ministers took note of preliminary assessments of the lessons which NATO might learn from the conduct and outcome of this conflict, and resolved that the matter should be given further intensive study. In the context of the discussion on the situation in the Middle East they noted with approval the steps which are being taken to ensure the sufficiency of military oil stocks essential for the defence of the Alliance.

7. Ministers discussed a report on some aspects of the possibility of specialization of defence rôles in the Central Region, prepared at their request following the initiative taken by the Defence Minister of the Netherlands at their Spring meeting. They accepted the recommendations of this report and welcomed a statement by the Netherlands' Minister with reference to the replacement of the F104G aircraft. They moreover gave directions for the study to be extended into further fields of possible specialization.

8. Ministers discussed an interim report on measures to improve the flexibility and effectiveness of the tactical air forces in the Central Region, through changes in organization, command and control. As an initial measure, Ministers agreed in principle to the formation of a new Headquarters under the title of Allied Air Forces Central Europe, and agreed that a Commander should be designated and a location determined in the near future.

9. With regard to MBFR, Ministers welcomed the position of the United States that, given a similar approach by their Allies, their forces in Europe would be maintained and improved and would not be reduced unilaterally. They also recognized that the maintenance of United States forces in Europe at their present level calls for a common effort on the part of the Allies to achieve a solution to the financial problems which the United States incurs thereby.

10. In this connection Ministers considered a report from a special Study Group on the budgetary and balance of payment problems arising from the stationing of United States forces in Europe and discussed a number of possible means of relieving them. They noted that study has been initiated on how a number of these measures might be implemented on a multilateral or bilateral basis. The United States has been assured that this examination will be conducted on a positive basis. They recognized the particular effort envisaged by the Federal Republic of Germany in the bilateral negotiations now in progress with the United States regarding arrangements for offsetting balance of payment deficits arising from the stationing of

United States forces in Germany. Such arrangements will represent a major contribution towards a common solution. They emphasized the necessity for other countries of the Alliance to take active measures to this end. They declared the intention of their countries to participate in multilateral or bilateral arrangements towards providing a common solution to the United States problem, and directed their staffs to work actively and rapidly to this end. In this connection several countries pointed to the contribution which would be made to the United States balance of payments position by their prospective purchases of military equipment in the United States.

11. Ministers agreed to examine how the share of the United States in the civil and military budgets of NATO and in the Infrastructure Programme might be substantially reduced.

12. Ministers noted the stage reached in determining the size and cost sharing of the new (1975-1979) Infrastructure Programme. They also noted that consideration was being given to widening the eligibility of projects for funding under the common Infrastructure Programme.

13. Ministers received from the Chairman of the Eurogroup an account of the Group's continuing work. They welcomed the significant improvements in force capabilities planned for 1974 and the renewed emphasis being placed on closer practical co-operation, particularly in equipment procurement.

14. Finally, Ministers gave directions for future military planning within the Alliance. They reaffirmed that the fundamental purpose of NATO forces is to deter aggression and to preserve all members of the Alliance from attack or threat of attack from outside. They stressed that fulfilment of this purpose depends on maintaining a capability of conventional, as well as nuclear, forces balanced with the Warsaw Pact.

15. They recognized that the efforts made by member countries in recent years to maintain and improve their forces have provided NATO with the basis of a substantial conventional capability, but stressed that further improvement was still required bearing in mind the growing capability of the Warsaw Pact. In this connection, they identified a number of key areas in which extra effort was required to correct current weaknesses in NATO defences, particularly in regard to the modernization and readiness of forces and their ability to operate together. They pledged themselves to early action and decision to remedy these weaknesses and agreed that the resources required were well within the capability of the Alliance to provide. Specifically they agreed to give new impetus to the programmes to provide protection for aircraft and airfields, to improve the anti-armour capability of NATO forces, and to raise the levels of war reserve stocks.

16. After reviewing the military contribution which each country plans to make towards the collective security of the Alliance over the years 1974-1978, Ministers approved the NATO Force Plan for this period and designated the forces which their countries undertake to commit to NATO over the coming twelve months.