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PRESS RELEASE (95)19

28 February 1995

**ALLIANCE MOVES AHEAD ON A PROJECT FOR A NATO-WIDE
GROUND SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM**

● Senior Armaments Representatives from member countries have agreed on measures to explore the scope for an ambitious cooperative programme to provide a NATO-wide Ground Surveillance System. This has the potential to be of similar importance and dimensions to the successful NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control (AWACS) programme.

Both for crisis management and for the political and military conduct of operations generally (including peacekeeping), military commanders need an effective picture of the ground situation, complementary to the one that AWACS provides for the air picture.

Four member nations are at present pursuing developments in this field. The United States and United Kingdom are proposing fixed-wing aircraft (J-STARS and ASTOR) which can cover theatre-wide areas of interest, and France and Italy are proposing heliborne systems (HORIZON and CRESO), which can cover Brigade/Division areas of interest. A number of other countries, including Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands have offered complementary capabilities or other sensors.

● The Armaments Representatives, meeting in a specially established Ground Surveillance Steering Committee, reached agreement in principle on the funding for a Project Office and expressed their appreciation to the Belgian authorities for providing accommodation for the Project Office in the Belgian Air Force Headquarters, opposite NATO HQ. Agreement was also reached to launch a number of technical studies aimed at identifying how an Alliance capability could best be constructed.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Robin Beard, NATO Assistant Secretary for Defence Support. Commenting after the meeting, Mr. Beard said that he detected "a real determination on the part of nations to push ahead with a programme that was one of the most ambitious examples of transatlantic armaments cooperation ever attempted".

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