

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1955–1957, WESTERN EUROPEAN SECURITY AND INTEGRATION, VOLUME IV

51. Telegram From the United States Delegation at the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting to the Department of State¹

Paris, December 14, 1956—8 p.m.

Polto 1424. Following is text of Secretary Wilson at North Atlantic Council meeting December 14 on item V of agenda.

Verbatim text:

The United States believes without reservation that the solidarity of NATO and its combined military strength are essential to the defense of the individual NATO nations and as a necessary bulwark to preserve freedom in the world. Unfortunately, as recent events have indicated too clearly, the objectives of the Soviets have not as yet changed and NATO continues to be a necessary deterrent to their aggressive intentions.

Soviet military capabilities for land, sea, and air warfare have increased as the industrial development of Russia and the satellite nations has progressed. The Soviets are known to have atomic weapons and increasing capabilities to deliver them. They are also devoting a disproportionately large part of their economic effort to capital goods expansion which is largely for military purposes rather than for raising the standard of living of their people. This growing military capability [Page 159] of the USSR accentuates the need for a continuing effort on the part of each of us to make certain that this increasing threat is being properly countered.

Many, with reason, are coming to believe that the rise of Communism has reached and passed its peak and millions of people throughout the world are coming to realize that international Communism is not the path to security, social justice or happiness for individuals, nor the road to independence, prosperity and peace for any nation. Granted that these beliefs are justified by a careful analysis of current events, this in itself does not mean that the danger of military action has lessened. In fact, it may well mean that over the next several years the danger may even be increased.

Effective internationally balanced forces must remain a prime objective of NATO. It should not be our aim to seek to achieve completely balanced and self-sufficient forces within each NATO country's military establishment. The total of national military efforts should increasingly reflect the approved NATO military concepts that land, sea, and air forces must be provided in such strength and be so deployed that an aggressor will be discouraged from undertaking any type of aggression. Any changes in NATO force structure should, of course, be made under approved NATO procedures.

The United States Army is beginning to reorganize its divisions, using improved and more powerful weapons. The Chief of Staff of the United States Army has discussed the implications of the new United States Army divisional organization with the NATO Military Committee.

Atomic fire support for ground combat operations has been strengthened in NATO by the addition of the Southern European Task Force which provides the first specialized ground atomic force designed for use in support of NATO operations.

The modernization of the United States Navy through its shipbuilding and conversion program, is resulting in continuous improvements in its anti-submarine warfare and fleet air defense capabilities. In addition, over the past several years the striking power of the fleet has been increased manyfold. In this regard the Navy's atomic capability in both offensive and defensive roles has played a major part.

All tactical bombers and fighter bombers of the United States Air Force assigned to NATO are now trained and equipped to deliver atomic weapons. It is our view that this development has increased many times the deterrent effect of the military forces available to NATO commanders. While not specifically assigned to NATO, the Strategic Air Command, which is being modernized and strengthened, is a vital deterrent force.

The continued improvement of the effectiveness of the air defense system for NATO is a matter of importance. The need exists [\[Page 160\]](#) for affirmative action by all member countries if we are to achieve the ultimate goal of an effective integrated air defense system. We must insure that required radar stations are placed in continuous operation. The Forward Scatter Communications System should be completed at the earliest feasible date. Requirements for skilled technicians must not be overlooked. Substantial improvement in the combat readiness for air crews is essential.

The NATO military structure is built around the individual national capabilities of its members. In developing adequate NATO forces it must be appreciated that, regardless of the weapons available, there is no magic formula for greatly increasing military strength and at the same time substantially reducing military expenditures. I am personally very conscious of the fact, for as many of you know, we are now in the process in the United States of finalizing our military budget for the coming fiscal year.

The United States Government has indicated on many occasions the importance it attaches to having the forces of NATO properly equipped. The manner and extent to which modern weapons will be incorporated into NATO forces must, of course, be determined in conjunction with NATO military authorities and with what the countries themselves can afford in their own overall military programs. The ability of the United States to assist in a modernization program for NATO is dependent to a considerable degree on the willingness and the increasing capability of the other NATO countries to provide most of the maintenance support for their own forces. In certain individual cases, alternative commitments may be required of countries whose forces are to be modernized.

Our belief in the need for continual modernization of NATO forces is reflected in the United States fiscal year 1957 Military Assistance Program. We intend to propose a similar program for fiscal year 1958. The types and amounts of weapons programmed for the current year will be made known to the individual countries after negotiations with appropriate governmental authorities.

Previously approved appropriated funds have been made available to provide an initial amount of Nike ground equipment. Current programs include air-warning equipment, Nike surface-to-air missiles and control equipment, Honest John rockets, Matadors, air-to-air rockets and improved anti-submarine warfare equipment. The United States will, of course, provide technical and training assistance where required to the individual countries receiving these weapons.

Our experience with modern weapons generally indicates that technical personnel who are willing to make military service their career will be required to master their complexity. The training of NATO forces, particularly with respect to utilization, maintenance [\[Page 161\]](#) and logistics

problems associated with modern aircraft and modern weapons requires increased emphasis by all of us.

In addition to the delivery of new weapons under its Military Assistance Program and to assist those of our allies who are willing and able to develop their own modern weapons system, the United States is prepared to make available promptly certain items of modern weapons and equipment along with appropriate technical data to assist in the development and production of such weapons and equipment. This will further the objectives of equipping NATO with modern weapons and will make better use of the vast pool of scientific and technological skills and resources that already exist in NATO countries.

The initiation of this program will require special arrangements to establish satisfactory provisions for security and for the exchange of information between the United States and the individual countries. The United States will consult as appropriate with the NATO military authorities and the International Staff in the assessment of national capabilities regarding utilization and production of new weapons.

The United States confirms the view expressed during the February 1956 military meeting² that expensive, unnecessary duplication and uncoordinated production of weapons in Europe should be avoided. We recognize that practical obstacles have impeded progress in this field in the past. The initiative for the development of appropriate plans for production rests primarily with the countries involved. It is difficult to see any final long-term solution for such military and economic problems except on the basis of coordinated or integrated production in Western Europe.

Countries in the best position to proceed should do so, coordinating their production plans and anticipated needs among themselves for maximum efficiency. They should keep NATO informed of their plans, accomplishments and requirements. They should welcome the participation of other nations in their production programs through subcontracting, licensing or other arrangements.

Progress has been made during the past year in bringing into focus many vital problems which confront the NATO Alliance. Each country must furnish to the common effort whatever it is best able to do within the limits of its national capabilities. All of us must increase our military effectiveness by carefully appraising the relative merits of weapons and equipment to make sure that our forces are equipped with the right ones. We must also practice efficiency and economy so that increased costs of the required new weapons and equipment will not become an intolerable burden. Improved training [Page 162] and utilization of personnel must be a necessary ingredient of our policies.

NATO must remain the bulwark of Western defense for the deterrence of military aggression. It must continue to be alert to the fundamental danger to all its members. It must do its full part in the great effort toward maintaining peace in the world. Only by the realization of the continuing nature of the Soviet threat and the magnitude of the task for which NATO was created can we retain our common heritage.

1. Source: Department of State, Central Files, 740.5/12-1456. Secret. Transmitted in two sections and repeated to the other NATO capitals and Moscow.
2. No record of this meeting has been found in Department of State files.

Kilde: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v04/d51>

© koldkrig-online.dk 2021