

Canadian Centre  
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**NATO - NUCLEAR WEAPONS ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

CCFPD

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## **NATO – NUCLEAR WEAPONS ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

**August 24, 2000**

**Ottawa**

*In partnership with Canada's NATO Mission in Brussels and the International Security Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a one-day roundtable on NATO and Nuclear Weapons (August 24, 2000). The participants first, examined NATO policies and the commitments made at the NTP Review Conference in New York (1999). Second, they assessed steps and strategies toward a successful revision of NATO policy starting with Ministers in December (2000). Third, they identified challenges to Canadian initiatives at NATO as well as possible partnerships. Chaired by Steve Lee, participants included David Wright (Canadian Ambassador to NATO), Ted Whiteside (Weapons of Mass Destruction Centre, NATO Headquarters), Senator Doug Roche (Middle Power Initiative), Tom McDonald (BASIC U.K.), as well as other government officials and non-government experts from Canada and abroad. The discussions benefited from the participation of Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, who hosted lunch for the Canadian participants the previous day.*

### **I. Goals and Key Questions for Discussion**

The goal of the one-day roundtable was to think about steps and strategies toward a successful revision of NATO's policy on nuclear weapons. Key questions included:

- What kind of technical changes are necessary to ensure that NATO conforms to the spirit and letter of the recently renewed NPT?
- Which factors would contribute to eliminating/diminishing the political value ascribed to nuclear weapons? How to change NATO's discourse (doctrine) on the essential nature and utility of nuclear weapons?
- How to ensure/catalyse support for Canadian initiatives within and outside NATO? How to assess potential problems faced by NATO governments at home and in respect to their relationship with the United States? How to mobilise public support and inspire political leadership for nuclear disarmament (elimination)?
- Where to go from here toward the December 2000 NATO Ministers Meeting and beyond?

### **II. Progress and Outlook**

Canada's initiatives aimed at advancing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation within NATO are important, difficult, and require a long-term commitment from the Canadian

government. Canada's goals at the Washington Summit (April 1999), grounded in part by the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (tabled on December 10, 1998), included:

- revising those paragraphs of NATO's Strategic Concept dealing with nuclear policy, more specifically: eliminating references to the political value ascribed to nuclear weapons
- advancing a broader disarmament agenda
- developing further NATO's role as a consultative body and a diplomatic actor
- engaging Russia in discussions about non-proliferation and disarmament through the Permanent Joint Council (PJC).

While modest improvements to the language on nuclear policy were made, Canada did not receive support for significant changes to the nuclear paragraphs. Canada did obtain a commitment to consider options for confidence and security building measures, verification, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as disarmament. A commitment was also made to deepen consultations with Russia. Later that year in Brussels (December 1999) it was decided to task the Senior Political Committee to *review* Alliance policy options so that a comprehensive and integrated approach to the agreements made at the Washington Summit is ensured. During the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Florence (May 2000), a Canadian recommendation that the SPC produce a framework for the December 2000 report was accepted. It was also in Florence, where Minister Axworthy appealed to make NATO's nuclear policy consistent with the NPT. NATO's commitment to a review process was a big step forward.

Canadians continue to provide substantive contributions to the final report through the work of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Centre (WMD) at NATO. The aim of the Centre is to improve information and intelligence-sharing among member states on proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. It should also help promote more active consultation and co-operation among the Allies. The final report may point to NATO's accomplishments since 1991 (i.e., reduction of NATO's nuclear forces by 85%, practical partnerships and seminars on small arms and light weapons, work on land mines, and the establishment of the WMD Centre), NATO's outreach programmes with Russia and others (i.e., Ukraine, Egypt, Israel) on non-proliferation issues, Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), negative security assurances, threat reduction in Russia, involvement of parties outside NATO, Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), and other issues.

While the procedural environment in which NATO operates is frustrating and tedious, modest (formal) progress often means tangible results. Getting something in December would be better than nothing. The United States will most likely press for more time to consult the new administration. Moreover, Canadian initiatives on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will have to compete with other items on NATO's agenda. Canada must continue to play a constructive role in addressing these as well as other issues.

- The debate in NATO could likely move forward in these areas:
- identification of issues (language) where NATO policy should be brought in line with the NPT Review Conference’s Final Document
  - discussions in NATO and later with the Russian government on sub-strategic weapons
  - identification of further steps aimed at increasing transparency and confidence between NATO and Russia.

### **III. Challenges**

The factors determining whether NATO’s process becomes an asset or a hindrance to global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts include:

- Some governments of NATO states are reluctant to re-open basic questions of nuclear policy.
- There is a continued belief within NATO in the applicability of the 1999 Strategic Concept.
- NATO’s new members are unwilling to tamper with the Alliance’s nuclear umbrella.
- Some NATO governments who station nuclear weapons on their territory are reluctant to start a public debate about these weapons and fear that their withdrawal could actually have a negative impact on their security.
- Canada lacks support from its likely allies (i.e., Netherlands, Norway) and faces relative isolation in pushing nuclear disarmament issues (while some governments may agree with the Canadian initiative in principle, they show only passive/non-demonstrable support).
- There has been a lack of a comprehensive and integrated approach in NATO’s policies. Defence issues have been separated from disarmament, for instance. This points to the fact that since it is virtually impossible to address non-proliferation without taking up doctrine, the current review should logically become a strategy review.
- NATO’s agenda includes other pressing issues, such as, for example: the U.S.-led Defence Capabilities Initiative, Balkan management, relationship with the European Union (i.e., Common Foreign and Security Policy), NATO enlargement, and the relationship with Russia.
- The position of the United States government on nuclear weapons has a great deal of impact on NATO’s policy. Some argued that it is doubtful the nuclear weapons doctrine would be so fundamental to NATO’s identity (unity) without the strong stand of the United States. Over the last eight years Washington has discouraged discussion of the nuclear question. Furthermore, there is a widespread uncertainty over the possible effects of the U.S. National Missile Defence (NMD) on the global arms control architecture, especially the START process. The upcoming elections also contribute to uncertainty about moving on NATO’s nuclear policy.
- The position of the Russian government on nuclear weapons makes multilateral nuclear disarmament (elimination) very difficult. Russia perceives having nuclear weapons as the last vestige of its former superpower status. There are serious concerns over the state, safety and location of the Russian sub-strategic arsenal.

- There is proliferation in North Korea, the Middle East, and South Asia.
- Vested interests to keep money, research, development and related industries are a factor.
- There is a wide-spread public apathy about nuclear issues. In the U.S. this apathy is related to the perception that there are more conflicts around the world than before, irrespective of the fact that the threat of a nuclear war has diminished.
- Media at home and abroad undermine the credibility of Canadian initiatives in NATO. The government often faces hostile press and journalists who lack technical expertise.
- European Union issues and political manoeuvring play an important role. There is confusion and contradictions in some governments which reflect the tension between Trans-Atlantic and European dimensions.

#### **IV. Initiatives and Tactics for December and Beyond**

The recent NPT Conference Review and the commitment of NATO to continue to review its policies present an opportune time for Canada and others to act, especially on the language issue. However, some participants agreed that the window to effect NATO's policies is rapidly closing. A doubt was expressed about whether the public and the abolitionist NGO community could be catalysed by an initiative aimed at a change of language. Some said that tampering with NATO's discourse may not engage the public and will not mean anything unless supported by tangible actions. Others pointed out the NATO's language is actually slowly changing. Some participants expressed fear that such incrementalism may lead to disaster.

The participants raised the following recommendations for action:

**1) Squaring NPT commitments with NATO's policies.** There are practical measures which can be taken by NATO to further the implementation of Article VI of the NPT, agreed at the NPT Review Conference in New York last year. Those *highlighted* during the discussion can be found in the Appendix.

Track II efforts aimed at narrowing the NPT-NATO policy gap include the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI). MPI aims to assist middle power governments to encourage and educate the nuclear weapon states to commit to immediate practical steps to reduce nuclear dangers and commence negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons. It will send delegations to some non-nuclear NATO states (as well as other countries) in early October to promote the New Agenda Coalition's resolution at the UN and to advocate a non-nuclear NATO strategy. A report will be submitted to the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

**2) Refusing to sign or endorse a treaty (re)stating the fundamental/essential nature of nuclear weapons.** Participants discussed a refusal to sign any documents (re)stating the essential/fundamental role of nuclear weapons, on the grounds that Canada believes the use of nuclear weapons to be not only no longer viable, but also immoral. While the refusal to sign a collective NATO document would require extensive government deliberation, there could be instances warranting such a course. (For instance, Canada would not have signed a treaty sanctioning the use of nuclear weapons in response to a chemical weapons attack). Silence may

also be an expression of disagreement. This tactic could be used especially by the non-nuclear weapons states. However, the unity of NATO is of key importance to the Alliance's survival. While some argue NATO's stand on nuclear weapons justifies a split from the Alliance, others say that NATO's usefulness in other areas (i.e., Balkan management) outweighs the argument for a divorce.

**3) Specific government-led initiatives for December could include:**

- The December Ministerial Statement could state that the sole purpose of having nuclear weapons is to counter nuclear attack, in order to resist the widening of the role of nuclear weapons (i.e., the ambiguity about the use of nuclear weapons in response to a chemical or biological weapon attack).
- An Arms Control Impact Statement showing that NATO's doctrine is not illegal.
- A Draft Resolution for the 1<sup>st</sup> Committee on the reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

**4) Promoting Dialogue and Assistance to Russia.** States should make a collective effort to help Russia address its growing inability to manage its nuclear capacity. The Kursk incident should be a lesson for Russia and its partners. States should, for instance, make financial and political contributions to the Russian early warning capability. A data exchange, allowing for a margin of error, may address some problems with information (including on the Russian side) and contribute to greater transparency. The Russian government must be convinced that transparency is not espionage. A conference on NATO and Russia addressing tactical nuclear weapons and their transparency could be suggested since it is an item for immediate concern.

**5) Initiatives aimed at developing an integrated and comprehensive debate.** An integrated approach to NATO's review process should be encouraged and operationalised at home and in foreign capitals. Lessons could be drawn from small arms and light weapons initiatives in a number of countries.

**6) Efforts aimed at education for nuclear disarmament (elimination).** Rallying public opinion of NATO member states around the use of nuclear power could culminate in support for Canadian initiatives. Raising awareness about the NMD and its implication for deterrence and disarmament regimes is important in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The belief system of leaders caught in a World War II mentality has to be changed. The same applies to Pakistan and India. Minister Axworthy could bring leaders together in an attempt to "educate them," using deterrence and de-coupling discussions as a hook.

One should also keep in mind that support for NATO within societies, including Canada, may not be as unequivocal as one may think. Canadian commitment to NATO may diminish as Canadian society changes and the connection to Great Britain and Europe continues to evolve and weaken.

**7) There is a need for an historical assessment** of whether the nuclear proliferation threat has increased or diminished. Some argue there has been no substantial increase in the number of countries which proliferate nuclear weapons, albeit they may be different countries today than two decades ago. However, one has to account for technological progress. **Research on public opinion** about nuclear issues would also be useful.

**8) It is necessary to keep involved over the long-term.** There could be a seminar organised next year to mark the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of NPT 2000 aimed at reviewing and assessing the 13 steps recommendations. It should be public and involve the media.

## **V. Partnerships**

The multilateral nature of security should be emphasised. There is a collective responsibility and culpability. U.S. unilateral tendencies in international affairs and in American public opinion are worrisome. A point should be made to the Americans that being anti-NMD does not mean being anti-American.

Important partnerships are: the NAC, the P-5 and the NATO-5. Other partnership ideas included:

- Canadians (i.e., Parliamentarians, NGOs and others) could use the work of their Parliament on nuclear weapons to connect with the U.S. Congress. A relationship could be built with Senator Sam Nunn, commissioned by Ted Turner to address the public apathy on nuclear issues in the U.S.
- Junior DFAIT officers in Washington could compile a Canadian NGOs "to-go-to" list.
- An embassy officer with a business background could attempt to find allies on Wall Street. New influential actors, who might be interested in Canada's objectives, could thus be brought into the debate.
- High ranking military officials in NORAD, who have relationships with their retired Russian counterparts may be able to ascertain what would the Russians perceive as a non-threatening American stand. The Canadians could play a useful role in such an informal dialogue. Military contact between the former superpowers proved useful in the past, perhaps there would be a room for dialogue today.
- Russian NGOs should be engaged and included in NATO's deliberations.
- Possible partnerships could be forged with countries who have decided to disarm in the 1990s, such as South Africa and Ukraine.
- A connection could be also made between the Inuits in Canada and the Greenlanders on nuclear issues.

## THE APPENDIX

### Practical measures which can be taken by NATO to further the implementation of Article VI of the NPT

- To reaffirm the need for strict and *universal adherence to NPT* by all states, NATO should state that nuclear weapons no longer form part of the defence policy of its non-nuclear member states and begin to implement this policy at the national level.
- To achieve early entry into force of the *Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)*, NATO should continue to ask the U.S. administration to re-submit the TCBC to the Senate and ensure that the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organisation receives the funding and technical support necessary to fulfil its mandate.
- To uphold a *moratorium on nuclear weapons test explosions or any other nuclear explosions* (pending entry into force of the CTBT), NATO should make clear that both U.S. presidential elections candidates are expected to refrain from testing were they to become President; press upon the U.S. Congress that a resumption of testing or development of new nuclear weapons would be destabilising; and state they see no requirement for new nuclear weapons that might necessitate testing.
- To comply with steps aimed at banning the *production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices*, NATO should address fissban issues (such as naval fuel and current stocks) and examine the compatibility of US plans for a National Missile Defence with a fissile material production ban.
- To comply with the *principle of irreversibility*, NATO should state publicly that nuclear weapons withdrawn from deployment will never be deployed again and that no further request increasing the size of nuclear weapons would be made.
- To support the *future disarmament success of the NPT*, NATO should remove the requirement for nuclear weapons from its defence policy.
- In compliance with NPT's aims, NATO should support the START process and the ABM treaty, and press the U.S. to abandon its current NMD plan.
- To further efforts by the Nuclear Weapon States to *reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally*, NATO's three Nuclear Weapon States should move to single-warhead submarine-launched ballistic missiles, following the successful START II pattern for intercontinental ballistic missiles. Moreover, the U.S. should retire its submarine-launched cruise missiles and dismantle the warheads. The U.S. should also reconsider its requirement for forward-basing in Europe free-fall nuclear bombs for U.S. aircraft.
- To ensure increased *transparency*, NATO should outline which options NATO might choose to work on should be released in December publically. NATO should declare the numbers and locations of its sub-strategic nuclear weapons and de-classify, as far as possible, nuclear doctrines and military strategies including key documents of the NATO Military Committee.





**AGENDA**

**NATO-NUCLEAR WEAPONS ROUNDTABLE**

**August 24, 2000, 9:30am to 4:30pm**

**Chateau Laurier, Tudor Room (1<sup>st</sup> Floor), 1 Rideau Street, Ottawa**

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|---------------|---|
| 9:30 - 9:40   | Welcome, Goals and Agenda: Steve Lee (Chair)  |
| 9:40 - 9:50   | Roundtable Introductions  |
| 9:50 - 10:15  | Setting the Scene: The View from Bruxelles <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Canadian Ambassador to NATO, David Wright</li></ul>  |
| 10:15 - 10:30 | Comment: Peggy Mason, former Disarmament Ambassador<br>Questions  |
| 10:30 - 10:50 | NPT Commitments and NATO Doctrine <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tom McDonald, BASIC</li></ul>   |
| 10:50 - 11:10 | Technical Issues for NATO in arms control, disarmament, nuclear sharing issues, and preparing for Start III. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Otfried Nassauer, Berlin Information Centre for Transatlantic Security (BITS)</li></ul>          |
| 11:10 - 12:30 | Comment: Ernie Regehr, Project Ploughshares<br>Discussion   |
| 12:30 - 13:00 | Short Break and Working Lunch (Sandwiches)  |
| 13:00 - 13:20 | From Here to December (Setting the Scene for the Ministerial Meeting):<br>Preparation of the "Confidence and Security Building" Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ted Whiteside, Weapons of Mass Destruction Centre, NATO staff</li></ul> |
| 13:20 - 14:00 | Comment: Karel Koster, Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation (PENN)<br>Discussion   |

**continued...**

- 14:00 - 15:30      Next Steps: NATO Spring 2001 and Beyond
- Middle Powers: Senator Doug Roche (15 mins)
  - Public Opinion: Tom Graham, Second Chance Fdn. (15 mins)
  - Research: Dan Plesch, BASIC (15 mins)
- 15:30 - 16:15      Coffee and Discussion
- 16:15 - 16:30      Concluding Remarks (Chair)



**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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