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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF AN
ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Mr. Secretary General, Members of the Council.

President Truman, in 1949, transmitted the text of the North Atlantic Treaty to the Congress of the United States with his assessment of its importance. "Events of this century," he wrote, "have taught us that we cannot achieve peace independently. The world has grown too small. The security and welfare of each member of this community depends on the security and welfare of all. None of us alone can achieve economic prosperity or military security. None of us alone can assure the continuance of freedom." So spoke President Truman. These words, describing the interdependence of the North Atlantic Nations, are as accurate today as they were a quarter century ago.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, leaders of the NATO nations met here in Brussels to reaffirm the Declaration on Atlantic Relations, the fundamental purposes of an Alliance that had fulfilled its promises by providing for the security, promoting the welfare and maintaining the freedom of its members.

We meet here today to renew our commitment to the Alliance. We meet to remind our citizens in the fifteen member nations, by our presence, of the strength and stability of the transatlantic ties that unite us, and to restate our pledge to collective self-defense. We are assembled to address the serious problems we face and to review the steps we must take to deal with them.

Renewal of our commitment to the Alliance is the most important of these purposes. The United States of America, unconditionally and unequivocally, remains true to the commitments undertaken when we signed the North Atlantic Treaty, including the obligation in Article 5 to come to the assistance of any NATO nation subjected to armed attack. As treaties are the supreme law of my land, these commitments are juridically binding in the United States. These commitments are strategically sound, politically essential and morally justifiable and therefore command broad support in the United States. They remain the firm foundation, as they have for twenty-six years, on which our relationship rests. This foundation has well served the purposes for which it was created. It will go on serving these purposes, even in the face of new difficulties, as long as we continue our common resolve.

In the treaty we signed twenty-six years ago, and from which we drew confidence and courage, we pledged:

- To live in peace with all peoples and all governments.
- To safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of our peoples founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- To promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area.
- To settle by peaceful means any international dispute in which any one of us may be involved.

-- To eliminate conflict in international economic policies and encourage economic collaboration.

-- To maintain and develop our individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid.

-- To consult together when any one of us is threatened.

-- To consider an armed attack against one as an armed attack against all.

There is no need today to improve on that statement of principles and purposes. It remains as clear, as resolute, and as valid today as when first adopted. But it is worth reminding ourselves of these pledges as we turn our attention and energies to the problems we now face both outside and within the Alliance -- problems very different from those we confronted 26 years ago. As NATO heads of governments and friends, we have a duty to be frank and realistic with one another. Therefore, I must cite the following matters of concern to the United States and of importance to the Alliance:

-- In Indochina, the events of recent months have resulted in enormous human suffering for the people of Cambodia and Viet-Nam, an ordeal that touches all human hearts. Because of the United States' long involvement in Indochina, these events have led some to question our strength and reliability. I believe that our strength speaks for itself -- our military power remains, and will continue to remain, second to none -- of this let there be no doubt -- our economy remains fundamentally sound and productive; and our political system has emerged from the shocks of the past year stronger for the way in which it met a severe internal test. Our actions will continue to confirm the durability of our commitments.

-- There have been strains and difficulties within the Alliance during the past year. Serious disagreements have marred relations among some members. The unity of the Alliance and our common resolve have come into question.

-- There are some problems that relate directly to our defense capabilities. I refer to increasing pressures to reduce the level of military commitments to NATO despite the fact that the forces of our potential enemies have grown stronger. We also face basic problems of military effectiveness. A generation after its creation, the Alliance wastes vast sums each year, sacrificing military effectiveness. We have simply not done enough to standardize our weapons. We must correct this. We must also agree among ourselves on a sensible division of weapons development programs and production responsibilities. And we must do more to enhance our mutual capacity to support each other both in battle and logistically. The pressures on defense budgets throughout the Alliance should by now have convinced each of us that we simply must rationalize our collective defense.

-- In the field of energy, we are still not immune from the political pressures that result from a heavy dependence on external sources of energy. Indeed, we are becoming more vulnerable each month. We have made joint progress in offsetting the effect of the action taken last year by the major oil producing countries. But we have far more to do.

-- In the Middle East, there remains a possibility of a new war that not only could involve the countries in the area but also sow discord beyond the Middle East itself, perhaps within our Alliance.

This is a formidable array of problems. However, we have faced formidable problems before. Let us master these new challenges with all the courage, conviction and cohesion of this great Alliance. Let us proceed. It is time for concerted action.

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At this important stage in the history of the Alliance, we must pledge ourselves to six primary tasks:

-- First, we must maintain a strong and credible defense. This must remain the foremost objective of the Alliance. If we fail in this task, the others will be irrelevant. A society that does not have the

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vigor and dedication to defend itself cannot survive. Neither can an Alliance. For our part, our commitment not to engage in any unilateral reduction of US forces committed to NATO remains valid. But that is not enough. We must make more effective use of our defense resources. We need to achieve our long-standing goals of common procedures and equipment. Our research and development efforts must be more than the sum of individual parts. Let us become truly one in our allocation of defense tasks, support and production.

--Second, we must preserve the quality and integrity of this Alliance on the basis of unqualified participation, not on the basis of partial membership or special arrangements. The commitment to collective defense must be complete if it is to be credible. It must be unqualified if it is to be reliable.

--Third, let us improve the process of political consultation. We have made considerable progress in recent months but there is -- as each of us knows -- room for improvement by all parties if we are to maintain our solidarity. This is of particular importance if we are to move forward together in our efforts to reduce the tensions that have existed with the Warsaw Pact nations for more than a quarter of a century. We should further cultivate the habit of discussing our approaches to those matters which touch the interests of all so that we can develop common policies to deal with common problems.

--Fourth, let us cooperate in developing a productive and realistic agenda for detente -- an agenda that serves our interests and not the interests of others who do not share our values. I envision an agenda that anticipates and precludes the exploitation of our perceived weaknesses. One item on that agenda must be to assure that the promises made in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe are translated into action to advance freedom and human dignity for all Europeans. Only by such realistic steps can we keep CSCE in perspective, whatever euphoric or inflated emphasis the Soviet Union or other participants may try to give it. Another agenda item should be the negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe. We in NATO should be prepared to take appropriate initiatives in these negotiations if they will help us to meet our objectives. But the Soviet Union and its allies should also be prepared to respond in good faith on the common objectives both sides should be working toward -- undiminished security for all -- but at a lower level of forces.

--Fifth, let us look to the future of the West itself. We must strengthen our own democratic institutions and encourage the growth of truly democratic processes everywhere. Let us also look beyond our Alliance as it stands today.

As an important topic on this agenda, we should begin now to consider how to relate Spain with Western defense. Spain has already made, and continues to make, an important contribution to Western military security as a result of its bilateral relationship with the United States.

--Sixth, we should rededicate ourselves to the Alliance as a great joint enterprise, as a commitment to follow common approaches to shared aspirations. We must build on the contribution our Alliance already makes through the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society in coping with the environmental problems of industrialized societies. We must address the issues of population, food and raw materials. We must find ways to strengthen the world trading and monetary system, and to meet the imperatives of energy development and conservation. With the wealth and technological skills which are the products of our free systems, we can make progress toward a better standard of life in all of our countries if we work together.

These six primary tasks of the Alliance illustrate the breadth and depth of our responsibilities and opportunities. They reflect how very complex the world has become and how much more difficult it is to manage the Alliance today than a generation ago. Then, our problems were relatively simple to define. It was easier to agree on common solutions. Today the problem of definition seems more complicated. In many of our countries there has been a fragmentation of public and parliamentary opinion which has made it more difficult for governments to mobilize support for courses of action of importance to the Alliance.

But there are constants as well, and they are--in the final analysis--more important than the complexities. Together we continue to be the greatest reservoir of economic, military and moral strength in the world. We must use that strength to safeguard our freedom and to address the grave problems that confront us.

I am proud of America's role in NATO and I am confident of the future of our Alliance.

As President of the United States--but also as one who has been a participant and close observer of the American political scene for close to thirty years--I assure you that my country will continue to be a strong partner. On occasion, in the public debate of our free society America may seem to stray somewhat off course. But the fact is that we have the willpower, the technical capability, the spiritual drive and the steadiness of purpose that will be needed. Today we in the United States face our NATO commitments with new vision, new vigor, new courage, and renewed dedication.

America's emphasis is on cooperation--cooperation within NATO and throughout the world. From diversity, we can forge a new unity. Together, let us build to face the challenges of the future.

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