

Reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy – modernisation of theatre nuclear forces (London, 12 November 1980)

Caption: On 12 November 1980, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates the reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy – modernisation of theatre nuclear forces. The Council shares the Assembly's view that it is essential for the Atlantic Alliance to maintain sufficient forces to ensure adequate deterrence in the face of the steady build-up of Soviet military forces. But the Council notes that the current long-range systems of the Alliance are ageing and that the allies therefore decided on 12 December 1979 to modernise the long-range theatre nuclear forces stationed in Europe and to deploy US ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing II ballistic missiles from the end of 1983. The Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are also continuing to support negotiations with the Soviet Union for an agreement on the limitation and reduction of nuclear forces. The WEU Council emphasises the efforts made by the Alliance to stimulate the arms control process in Europe, particularly the control of theatre nuclear forces.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Assembly Recommendation 345. 12.11.1980. C (80) 149. 3 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1980, 01/06/1980-30/11/1980. File 202.413.26. Volume 1/1.

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/reply_by_the_weu_council_to_assembly_recommendation_345_on_new_weapons_and_defence_strategy_modernisation_of_theatre_nuclear_forces_london_12_november_1980-en-6abcc9ae-09c4-4f65-918f-6a7ed466d57a.html



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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Assembly Recommendation 345

(C (80) 78)

The Secretary-General circulates herewith the Council's reply to Assembly Recommendation 345.

This reply, adopted by the Council at their meeting on 12th November, 1980, has been forwarded to the Assembly (CR (80) 12, IV).

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London, S.W.1.

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Reply to Recommendation 345
on new weapons and defence strategy
- modernisation of theatre nuclear forces

The Council agree that it is essential for the Alliance to maintain sufficient forces to ensure adequate deterrence in the face of the steady build-up of Soviet military forces across the board. In particular in the age of strategic parity the need is felt for a capability to deter the Russians from calculating - however incorrectly - that they could use or threaten to use their nuclear forces against Europe without putting Soviet territory at risk because the Americans would be deterred from responding with their central systems. The present systems of the Alliance capable of providing this long range capability are ageing, increasingly vulnerable to the new and highly accurate Soviet weapons, particularly the Backfire and the SS20 and do not include land-based long range theatre nuclear systems.

It was against this background that ministers participating in the special meeting of foreign and defence ministers on 12th December, 1979, agreed to modernise the long range theatre nuclear forces stationed in Europe by the deployment of US ground launched cruise missiles and Pershing II ballistic missiles from the end of 1983. Those members of the Council whose governments were parties to the decisions of 12th December, 1979, believe that this step taken along with other measures in the defence field represents a measured and realistic response to the Soviet military programmes.

In parallel, the Ministers of the governments concerned also agreed to support an American offer to the Russians to negotiate limitations on US and Soviet long range theatre nuclear forces in the context of SALT. After initially rejecting this offer on the grounds that they were not prepared to negotiate until NATO's TNF modernisation decision had been

/revoked or ...

revoked or suspended, the Russians have indicated a certain willingness to negotiate. The Council note with interest that in accordance with a previously reached understanding the Heads of the United States and the U.S.S.R. delegations met on 17th October, 1980, to begin discussions of questions related to the limitation of certain United States and Soviet nuclear forces.

The TNF arms control offer was part of a wider package of arms control measures put forward last December including:

- the unilateral withdrawal of 1,000 US nuclear warheads from Europe as part of the decision on TNF modernisation, and the decision to withdraw other warheads on a one-for-one basis as new systems are introduced;
- a proposal for an interim Phase I agreement designed to facilitate progress in the MBFR negotiations;
- a package of associated measures in MBFR designed to ensure compliance with an agreement and to make military activities more transparent, thereby improving mutual confidence;
- in furtherance of the CSCE process, readiness to examine proposals concerning confidence-building measures and a Conference on Disarmament in Europe.

These proposals represent a serious effort to stimulate the arms control process in Europe. The programme of action which they envisage offers a major new opportunity for creating more constructive relations between East and West.