

# Draft reply by the British delegation to the WEU Council to Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy – modernisation of theatre nuclear forces (London, 6 August 1980)


**Caption:** On 6 August 1980, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates a draft reply by the WEU Council, prepared by the United Kingdom delegation, to Assembly Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy – modernisation of theatre nuclear forces. The text is reproduced almost in its entirety in the final reply to the Recommendation (C (80) 149).

**Source:** Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy – modernisation of theatre nuclear forces. London: 06.08.1980. WPM (80) 19. 6 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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# WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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6th August, 1980

## SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Recommendation 345  
on new weapons and defence strategy  
- modernisation of theatre nuclear forces  
(C (80) 78)

The Secretary-General circulates herewith a draft reply, prepared by the United Kingdom delegation, to Assembly Recommendation 345 on new weapons and defence strategy - modernisation of theatre nuclear weapons.

This draft will be considered by the working group at their next meeting, on 15th September.

GAH

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Draft reply to Recommendation 345  
prepared by the United Kingdom delegation

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 Alliance needs 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 capable of providing this long range capability, the American F.111's and the British Vulcans, are ageing and increasingly vulnerable to the new and highly accurate Soviet weapons, particularly the Backfire and the SS20.

It was against this background that NATO Ministers agreed in December 1979 to modernise the Alliance's long range theatre nuclear forces by the deployment of US ground launched cruise missiles and Pershing II ballistic missiles in Europe from the end of 1983. The Council believe that this step,

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taken along with other measures in the defence field, for example the commitment to a 3% increase in defence spending and the measures in the Long Term Defence Programme, represents a measured and realistic response to the Soviet military programmes.

In parallel, NATO Ministers 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 III. 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 suspended, the Russians have recently indicated a willingness to negotiate in certain circumstances. The Allies are currently evaluating this Russian response.

The TNF arms control offer was part of a wider package of arms control measures put forward by the Allies 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 ...

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- 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.

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RECOMMENDATION 345

on new weapons and defence strategy -  
modernisation of theatre nuclear forces

The Assembly,

- (i) Regretting the deterioration in the military balance resulting from the steady increase in levels of many Soviet weapons systems, and deploring in particular the increased nuclear threat posed by the deployment by the Soviet Union of new medium-range nuclear weapons - the SS-20 missile and Backfire bomber - and large numbers of battlefield nuclear weapons;
- (ii) Believing it essential for the Alliance to maintain and update whenever necessary a complete range of weapons systems to ensure a credible military capability in all parts of the triad of conventional, theatre nuclear and strategic nuclear weapons on which the strategy of deterrence through a capacity for flexible response is based;
- (iii) Believing further that political responsibility for and the risks of this policy must be shared by all countries of the Alliance, in particular, while recognising various national conditions, through readiness to accept the stationing on their territory of such weapons as may be necessary for its implementation;
- (iv) Believing the essential continuity between the three parts of the triad would be dangerously weakened if the threat posed by the Soviet SS-20 missiles and Backfire bomber were not to be countered by the Alliance's overall strategic capabilities;
- (v) Recalling moreover that the policy of the Alliance is to seek security through détente as well as deterrence, and that reliable arms control agreements and confidence-building measures can contribute as much to the establishment of military balance as the provision of adequate weapons systems;

/((vi) ...

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(vi) Noting therefore that Mr. Brezhnev's speech in East Berlin on 6th October, 1979, may be a sign that the Soviet Union now understands that the NATO countries consider the deployment of the SS-20 a serious threat, and is prepared for negotiations on the whole question of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe, although many points still have to be clarified,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL

Call on the North Atlantic Council:

To seek to redress the military balance, now threatened in particular by the deployment of new Soviet nuclear weapons systems:

- (a) by taking the decisions necessary to ensure that the growing imbalance between Warsaw Pact and NATO long-range theatre nuclear forces is corrected in due course;
- (b) by accompanying these decisions by a firm offer to enter into arms control negotiations with a view to limiting long-range theatre nuclear force deployments on both sides;
- (c) by continuing to seek agreement on significant reductions in present numbers of Soviet medium-range nuclear weapons;
- (d) by relying meanwhile on the whole range of existing weapons systems based in Europe, at sea, and in the United States to counter the threat posed by present levels of Soviet weapons;
- (e) by seeking any opportunity for agreement on mutual and balanced reductions of central and theatre nuclear weapons and of conventional forces and weapons.

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