DRAFT STATEMENT REGARDING THE ACQUISITION AND CONTROL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOR POSSIBLE USE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Last autumn the Government announced its intention to introduce the BOMARC ground-to-air missile into the Canadian air defence system and to equip the Canadian Brigade in Europe with the LACROSSE ground-to-ground missile.

2. The Government's decision to acquire these modern weapons for use by the Canadian forces was based on its appreciation, in the light of the best expert advice available, of the need to strengthen our air defence in the fact of the threat to this continent and on its determination to continue a full and effective contribution to the NATO shield. The full potential of these defensive weapons is achieved only when they are armed with nuclear warheads.

3. The Government is, therefore, examining with the United States Government questions connected with the acquisition of nuclear warheads for BOMARC and other defensive weapons for use by the Canadian forces in Canada and the storage of warheads in Canada. The problems connected with the arming of the Canadian Brigade in Europe with short range nuclear-capable delivery systems for NATO's defence tasks are also being considered.

4. We are confident that we will be able to reach formal agreement on satisfactory means to serve our common objective. It will of course be some time before these weapons will be available for use by Canadian forces. At an appropriate time the Government...
will inform the House, within the limits of security, of the general terms of understanding which are reached between the two Governments on this subject, and an opportunity will be provided for the House to discuss them.

5. I wish at this time, however, to give the House an indication of certain basic considerations in the Government's thinking on the question of the acquisition and control of nuclear weapons.

6. The first important consideration is the Government's firm belief in the importance of limiting the spread of nuclear weapons at the independent disposal of national governments. The Secretary of State for External Affairs said in the External Affairs Committee on July 29, last, that it took but little imagination to envisage the dangers of the situation if the know-how with respect to the production of nuclear weapons were disseminated in numerous countries of the world. The prospect of further dissemination of such techniques continues to be a matter of fundamental concern to the Government. As a contribution to this important objective, it is the policy of the Canadian Government not to undertake the production of nuclear weapons in Canada, though we believe our scientists and technicians are quite capable of making them.

7. The second consideration is the Government's determination to leave no avenue unexplored in the search for an acceptable agreement on disarmament with the Soviet Union, even though we must reluctantly admit the need in present circumstances for nuclear weapons
of a defensive character. We will not lose sight of this objective of disarmament. Even if that objective is capable of only partial realization, as for example in agreed zones of inspection in the Arctic, or agreed measures to guard against surprise attack, our firm support can be counted on. In the meantime, however, we cannot minimize the importance of providing the strongest deterrence to aggression and of protecting the deterrent power against surprise attacks.

8. The third basic consideration is the Government's commitments to support the collective security of the NATO alliance. Whether our effort is made directly in continental defence - the defence of the Canada-United States Region of NATO - or whether it is made on the continent of Europe, it will be made in concert with the efforts of our NATO partners. In the one context as in the other, it is the Government's intention to provide Canadian forces with modern and efficient weapons to enable them to fulfill their respective roles.

9. Following from the Government's belief that the spread of nuclear weapons at the independent disposal of national governments should be limited, we believe it is right that ownership and custody of the nuclear warheads should remain with the United States. The requirements of Canadian and United States legislation on atomic energy will continue to apply. There will be no change in Canada's responsibility for regulating all flights of aircraft over Canadian territory.
10. The Canadian and United States Governments have assumed joint responsibility for the air defence of Canada and the continental United States including Alaska and have implemented their responsibilities through the establishment of the North American Air Defence Command. The Canadian Government exercises with the United States Government joint responsibility for the operations of the Command including the use of defensive nuclear weapons if that should become necessary. In the event that these defensive weapons are made available for use by NORAD, they could be used only in accordance with procedures governing NORAD's operations approved in advance by the two Governments. These weapons, therefore, would be used from Canadian territory or in Canadian air space only under conditions previously agreed to by the Canadian Government. This interpretation by the Canadian Government of the exercise of common responsibility for continental air defence is shared by the United States Government.

11. The procedures concerning custody and control of nuclear warheads for use by Canadian forces operating under the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and Supreme Allied Commander in the North Atlantic ocean will be subject to negotiation with appropriate NATO partners and the Supreme Allied Commanders.