Foreign Affairs Committee - Atlantic Treaty

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The passage of the North Atlantic Treaty committed the United States to a program of mutual defense — if the Treaty meant more than the paper it was written on. Article 5 of the Treaty reads in part:

The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that if such an armed attack occurs, each of them in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognised by article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it seems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

This is the agreement we have entered into with the other nations of Europe.

We all know that if a grave emergency develops in Europe, the United States will be obliged to act. Our policy line is very clear on this point. But such an emergency would be the war we are trying to prevent and which we must prevent. Our preventive action, as I have already said, is the North Atlantic Treaty. We have joined with the other signatories in building through self-help and mutual aid, a common defense for the common good. Now our partners in western Europe have turned to us for help. Their appeals rise out of the same conditions that led to the proposal for the North Atlantic Treaty.

The principal goal that is sought, then, in the military assistance program is to provide western Europe — our first line of defense — with the physical beginning of the means to deter aggression. It will help build up our friends to a point where they can no longer be bulldozed. The nucleus of physical strength they have asked from us will enable the Defense Committee established under article 9 of the North Atlantic Treaty to further the development of unified defense plans for the common good.
In addition to the Atlantic Treaty, Article VI of the Constitution of the United States makes it clear that because of our approval of this Treaty that it is now a part of the law of the land. The language of Article VI of the Constitution of the United States reads as follows:

"This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land."

In my opinion, the Atlantic Treaty makes it mandatory upon the U. S. that we vote for this measure and implement that Treaty on the terms laid down within it.

We have fought two world wars in Europe, and it is my hope that the Treaty and its implementation will prevent a third world war. Should a war arise in the North Atlantic area we would have no choice but to become involved.

I, for one, am willing to take the risks involved in this program. To do nothing is to sow the seeds of war. It is my hope that the risks taken will serve as a deterrent to war and help create the conditions for a peace.

The aid this country is giving represents only a fraction of the effort Europe must make for its own and -- inescapably -- America's security.

Therefore, the Senate, in agreeing to the Atlantic Pact, did commit this country to the action we are now taking. This action is further emphasized by Article VI of the Constitution of the United States. The implementation of the Pact should make us strong defensively, should constitute western Europe our first line of defense, and should serve as a deterrent to further U.S.S.R. expansion there.

Mr. Chairman, we are involved in Europe whether we like it or not. We are involved without the Atlantic Treaty. We are involved without this program.
We are involved by virtue of the presence of our forces in Germany, Austria, and Trieste. A putative enemy could attack the Western Powers only by attacking us first in Germany and Austria. Accordingly, the only question remaining is: Will we be involved for the protection of our own national security, to our own advantage and in the interest of peace, or will we be involved ineffectively, timidly, and with a vacillating policy which can lead only to calamity?

Mr. Chairman, when the Secretary of State came before our committee he quoted from Mr. Justice Holmes, who said: "The judgment of nature upon error is death."