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### Congressional Record S. 5351-52 - Statement of Senator Mansfield

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March 14, 1966

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ~~WILLIAM F. MARSHALL (D., MISSISSIPPI)~~

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Mr. President:

In a recent proposal, President DeGaulle of France has stated that he wants the withdrawal of all French forces from NATO and the removal from French soil of all headquarters and foreign bases that are not under French operational control. The DeGaulle announcement should be taken in stride. It is well to keep in mind that the announcement is addressed only to the organizational structure of NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty itself remains in effect until 1970, regardless of this announcement. Indeed, President DeGaulle was at pains to make clear the continuance in force of the North Atlantic Treaty and France's continued adherence to it.

To repeat, what is directly involved in the statement of President DeGaulle is the NATO military organizational structure which has grown up under the North Atlantic Treaty. This structure owes its origins and forms largely <sup>to</sup> past U.S. military aid programs to Western Europe and to executive and departmental agreements of one kind or another.

It should be borne in mind, too, that the NATO structure dates from the time, a decade and a half ago, when Western Europe was still far from fully recovered from World War II and was still heavily dependent on the United States in many ways. Stalin ruled Russia and under him the structure of the Communist world, from East Germany to Peking and Vladivostok and *Pyongyang* was rigid, except for Yugoslavia. At that time, the need for NATO in its present form was crystal clear. The concept that the U.S. should bear the heaviest financial and other burdens with respect to it was readily accepted not only by ourselves but by all of the Western Europeans.

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It may be, therefore, that regardless of President DeGaulle's statement, the time has become ripe to re-evaluate, in a fundamental sense the structure of NATO. This organization, under the North Atlantic Treaty, has obviously been effective in deterring Soviet expansion in Europe and in promoting a great measure of military cooperation at a time of Europe's grave weakness. The need for deterrence or defense obviously remains, today, in Western Europe. But it appears to me that far greater responsibility than in the past, under the Treaty, can and should devolve on the European members of the Alliance. The responsibility and burdens still borne heavily by the United States might be properly reduced considerably in this process, especially in view of our commitments in Viet Nam.

With respect to the French announcement, it is well to remember that this is not the first expression of President DeGaulle's intentions along these lines. He has already withdrawn strength from NATO in the form of the French fleet and other elements of the French armed forces. Previous to his most recent announcement, he has stated on other occasions that he was considering precisely the proposals which are now contained in his formal letter to President Johnson and other heads of the Western nations. The only surprise, in fact, is that President DeGaulle made his statement at this time. There had been some anticipation that he would not move until 1969, the year in which it will be in order for any nation to give a year's notice of intention to withdraw from the North Atlantic Treaty.



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It seems to me that it ought to be regarded as most helpful that President DeGaulle has chosen to make known his views now on French participation in the NATO structure rather than temporizing until 1969. In this fashion, there is ample time for orderly change in that structure, without confusion with what is far more fundamental, that is, with the continuance of the North Atlantic Treaty itself. There is no reason to assume, in haste, that the Treaty must fall simply because the organization which has evolved under it undergoes revision. On the contrary, it seems to me that the search should begin at once and, without panic or rancor, for a further evolution in the organizational structure which will preserve the essence of the Treaty. I do not believe that it can be said or ought to be said that the existing organizational structure is the only one in which the North Atlantic Treaty can have meaning or desirability. Indeed, this nation has not said so.

I believe it would be well to consider the possibility of a meeting of the NATO nations in Paris in the near future for the purpose of finding out in specifics what President DeGaulle has in mind relative to France's position in NATO and to the North Atlantic Treaty itself. There are details involved here which can and must be fully understood if the situation is to be worked out satisfactorily.

We ought not lose sight of the fact that there still exists in common defense interests involving France and all the NATO nations, including the United States. The task of statesmanship, it seems to me, is to seek for a way to give new expression to these common interests in spite of the uncertainties and discomforts which inevitably accompany organizational change.

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It may well be that on closer examination, the NATO nations will find that now is perhaps the proper time to begin to reappraise the NATO structure. This reappraisal can take place not on the basis of general and preliminary statements ~~made~~ but on the basis of the facts and figures, on the basis of the current political and military realities in Europe and the world.

It may well be that on careful consideration it will be found that General DeGaulle, in raising the question which he has raised, has performed a needed service for the North Atlantic nations. He has provided stimulus for the member-states to consider deeply the position of NATO in an era, very much changed from the period in which it was inaugurated. From the point of view of the United States, it seems to me that one aspect that is clearly worthy of consideration in this respect is the question of reducing U. S. day-to-day obligations and forces in Europe. For one thing, short of nuclear war, it is obvious that Europe is in a position to take much better care of its own general defense than a few years ago. ~~England~~, In an economic sense, the situation is drastically changed for the better for Western Europe, not only domestically but in the region's over-all international position, particularly insofar as the balance of payments is concerned.

President Johnson's reply to General DeGaulle's note seems to me to be perfectly proper and correct. That, may I say, is not true of the interpretations of reciprocal antagonism which have been placed in some quarters upon the exchange of communications between the two



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Presidents. President Johnson's response has my full support and, I would hope that it will have the support of the Senate as a whole. The President has also taken the correct and necessary steps of assuring the other members of NATO that this nation wants the North Atlantic Alliance to continue. NATO is not going to fall apart. And to that end, may I say, it would appear most desirable that the members of NATO meet promptly <sup>They need</sup> to examine the situation with a view to making such adjustments in the organizational structure as may be necessitated, not only by President DeGaulle's indicated intentions but which may also be desirable in the light of the realities of a changed situation in Europe and the world.