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'Nato' - the
British contribution
to Allied Defence'



Nato-The British contribution to Allied Defence



THE last 25-30 years have seen a major shift in Britain's role in the world, from a major world power at the end of the Second World War to a medium-sized, European power today. The same period has seen the establishment and development of the North Atlantic Alliance, to which some thirty years of peace and security in Western Europe and North America are largely due. British defence policy today is based on the North Atlantic Alliance; and the British defence effort is concentrated on the Alliance in ways that best contribute to the strength of the Alliance itself, since this provides the key to Britain's own security.

Chieftain, the main battle tank of the British Army, on exercise in Germany.

DEFENCE and DETENTE

The North Atlantic Alliance was established in 1949, in conformity with the United Nations Charter, Article 51 of which recognises the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence – following the extension of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, through the maintenance and exercise of military power, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Today, the Alliance has two main functions. The primary task, and the one for which it was originally created, is to deter aggression and expansionism through military preparedness and political solidarity, and if necessary to resist armed attack against any member nation. For this purpose it has developed a military structure involving integrated commands, planning and the peace-time commitment of national forces, which is constantly being improved to take account of political and technological developments. At the same time, a major political objective of the Alliance is the achievement of a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees; and it is to this end that the Alliance's second function – to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be resolved – is directed. These two tasks, defence and deterrence coupled with persistent striving for detente, are complementary elements of the Alliance's approach to security.

Over the past few years there has been some progress towards a relaxation of international tension. The four-Power agreement on Berlin, the US-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the US, French and British agreements with the Soviet Union on the Prevention of Accidental Nuclear War, the talks currently underway between the US, the UK and the Soviet Union on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations (MBFR) and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), have all contributed towards detente. However, major political differences do still exist; in particular, the Russians have themselves made it clear that they see detente as a tactical arrangement facilitating the ultimate triumph of Communism worldwide; and as involving no lessening of the 'ideological struggle' against all forms of government other than Communism, and specifically not excluding their continued support by all means, including military, for "national liberation struggles". Despite the reduction in tension between East and West, detente has not yet resulted in a lessening of confrontation in military terms. In spite of their public commitment to detente and disarmament, the nations of the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union in particular, continue to devote enormous resources to developing their military capability.

THE MILITARY BACKGROUND

Although much of the Soviet equipment now reaching the front line in such large numbers derives from decisions taken several years ago, there is no sign that more recent developments in the field of detente are leading the Soviet Government to slacken the pace of its military effort.

The Soviet Union does not reveal figures which could be accepted as comparable with Western defence budget information, and has not been willing to take part in the UN Secretary-General's working group on standardised reporting of military expenditure. However, careful Western assessments suggest that, on the definitions customary in NATO of what constitutes military expenditure, the scale of Soviet military effort could not be sustained without a continuing resource allocation of the order of 11-13% of Soviet gross national product. It is clear that a very large proportion of the total goes on new weapons systems, including an immense high-technology research and development (R & D) programme over the entire range of military equipment.

Soviet naval forces continue to receive new classes of submarines, surface ships and aircraft. For example, in the last 5 years these have included Delta I and II nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines,

Charlie II nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines, Victor II nuclear-powered torpedo attack submarines, Tango diesel submarines, Backfire bombers for the Naval Air Force, and the Kiev class of aircraft carriers. Soviet ground forces have been strengthened by large numbers of self-propelled artillery, new tanks, infantry combat vehicles, helicopters (some of them very heavily armed) and missiles of advanced design. Major re-equipment programmes have markedly increased the range and weapon-load of Soviet aircraft. The modern swing-wing aircraft such as Fencer and Flogger have entered service, and Backfire has joined the Long-Range Air Force. New armaments and better avionics for reconnaissance, target acquisition and weapon aiming have been introduced. The new Soviet SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missile, which is road-mobile, and armed with multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicles is now being deployed, substantially increasing the threat to Western Europe. The ICBM force also continues to be improved in capability.

These most important qualitative improvements have not been at the expense of the traditional Soviet emphasis on quantity. Since 1968, in the Soviet Northern Fleet there has been an increase of 136% in nuclear powered submarines (6% in the

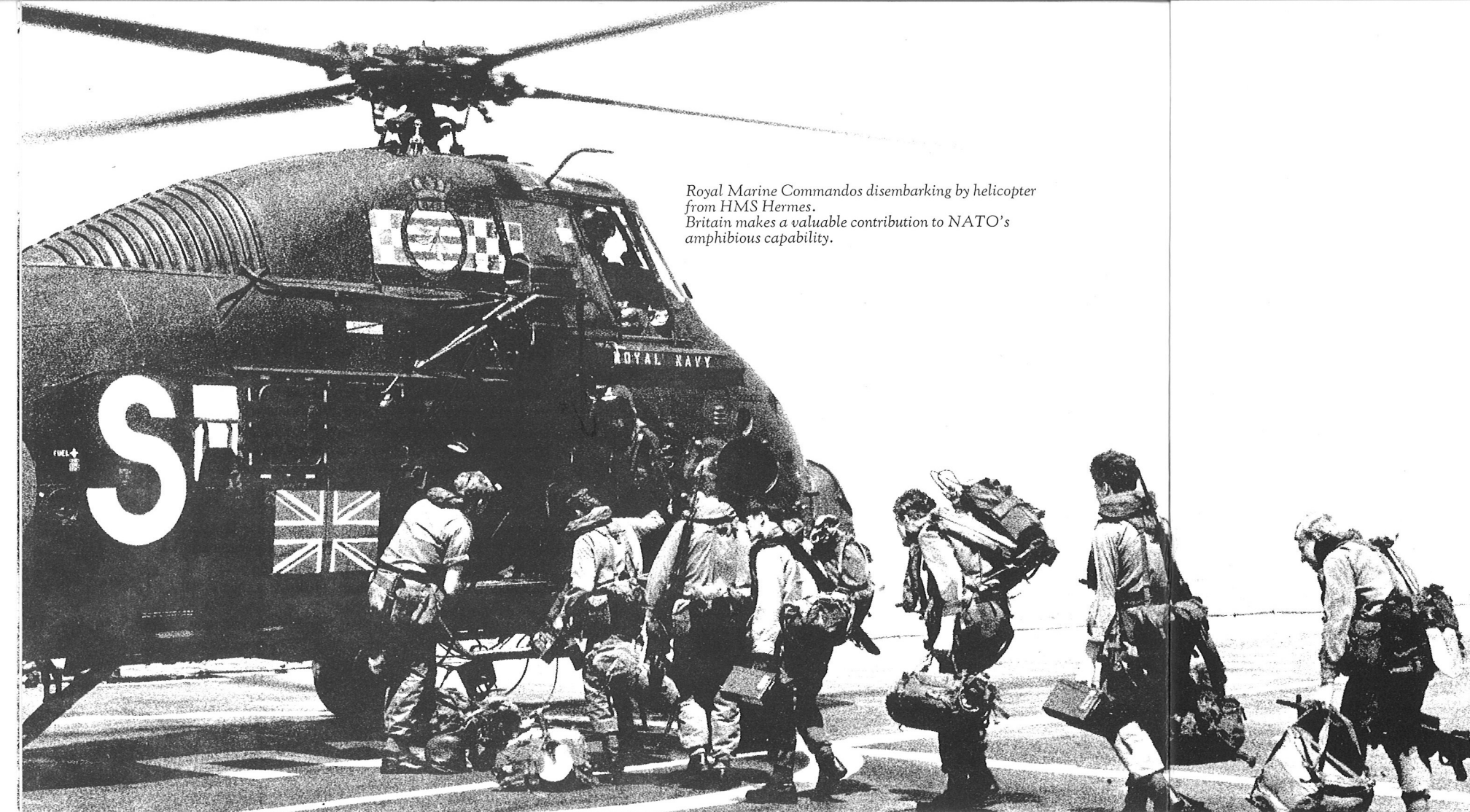
total number of submarines) 33% in cruisers and destroyers (and 283% in missile armed units), 44% in frigates and escorts, and 29% in fixed wing maritime aircraft. In Central Europe Soviet forces have increased by 31% in main battle tanks, 38% in artillery, 79% in armoured personnel carriers and 20% in fixed wing tactical aircraft. The armed forces of the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact allies are also being improved. The East German, Polish and Czech armies are being strengthened by more and better equipment, mainly of Soviet origin, such as air-defence missiles, armoured personnel carriers, artillery and obstacle-crossing equipment. In addition, East Germany has received modern assault helicopters and air-defence aircraft. Poland and Bulgaria have new swing-wing tactical aircraft and Hungary more modern air-defence aircraft.

The assessment of military balance is complex and many-sided, and cannot be reduced to a single neat ratio. On any view, however, Soviet forces have in many areas been strengthened in size and quality on a scale which goes well beyond the need of any purely defensive posture.

NATO STRATEGY

In order to meet this threat NATO's strategy of flexible response is based on the

principle that credible deterrence of military action of all kinds, including the reinforcement of political pressure, depends on maintaining a wide range of forces equipped with a balanced mixture of conventional weapons and theatre and strategic nuclear weapons, able to deter and, if necessary, to counter aggression at a variety of levels. While strategic and theatre nuclear weapons are vital to this strategy, in order to counter the nuclear threat posed by the Warsaw Pact and as the ultimate guarantee of NATO's determination to resist aggression, it would be unrealistic and dangerous to rely on the nuclear response to deter all forms of aggression. The danger in allowing the conventional imbalance to grow unchecked is that it would lower the nuclear threshold and make the deterrent strategy less credible. The Warsaw Pact might also be tempted to use its conventional superiority to gain a decisive advantage in any regional conflict. NATO must therefore maintain conventional forces to meet a conventional major attack anywhere in the Treaty area without being forced to resort to nuclear weapons at an early stage of conflict. This does not, however, mean that Soviet forces must be exactly matched in manpower and weaponry by NATO forces; what is necessary is that NATO's collective response should be adequate to conduct a stalwart conventional defence against any potential aggression.



Royal Marine Commandos disembarking by helicopter from HMS Hermes. Britain makes a valuable contribution to NATO's amphibious capability.

NATO DEFENCE EFFORT

During the past year NATO member Governments have clearly showed their determination to strengthen Alliance defence in the light of the unfavourable trends in the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In May 1977, following proposals made by President Carter at the London Summit meeting, NATO Defence Ministers:-

- a. agreed on Ministerial Guidance for the period 1979-1984;
- b. agreed to an immediate programme of short term defensive measures to be implemented by the end of 1978;
- c. set in hand a long-term defence programme to enable NATO forces to be better equipped to meet the needs of the 1980s and beyond.

The 1979-84 Ministerial Guidance set out the principles for national and NATO planning during the 5-year period, starting in 1979. It also called upon member countries to aim at an annual increase in defence expenditure of 3% in real terms from 1979, while recognising that for some countries economic circumstances would affect what could be achieved, while in other cases current levels of force contribution might justify bigger increases. Despite a difficult economic situation, Britain has responded positively to this call (see page 8). Britain has also made a substantial

contribution to the short term measures agreed upon by the Alliance in the three fields of anti-armour defence, war reserve munitions and readiness and reinforcement (for further details see page 16); and is participating fully in the studies on the ten priority areas of the long-term defence programme. Reports on this work will be made this spring both to NATO Defence Ministers and to the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at Heads of Government level.

BRITISH DEFENCE POLICY

Britain is fully committed to working with its Allies to preserve the credibility of NATO's strategy and political cohesion, and makes a major contribution to the forces required by the strategy, concentrating on those four areas where it can best contribute to the Alliance's security:

- a. the United Kingdom and its immediate approaches;
- b. the Eastern Atlantic and Channel;
- c. the Central Region in Europe;
- d. the NATO nuclear deterrent.

Britain also contributes specialist reinforcement forces.

BRITISH DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

Increasingly over the last decade Britain has concentrated her defence resources on the Alliance, although some residual commitments remain outside the Treaty area; for example in Belize and Hong Kong. The process was given further emphasis in the 1974 Defence Review. This review was concerned to maintain a modern and effective defence effort while reducing costs and bringing the burden of British defence expenditure more into line with that of our major European Allies. Subsequently, the Government found it necessary to make certain further reductions in planned expenditure, in order to bring about the right conditions for economic recovery; but the effect on Britain's front-line contribution to NATO, and its essential support, has been kept to the minimum. The British defence budget for 1978/79 amounts to over £6.9 billion; and some 40% of this budget, £2,770 million, is devoted to the continuing process of maintaining current equipment and of re-equipping our forces with the more modern equipment needed to match developments in the threat. On the latest NATO figures, Britain in 1977 spent a slightly higher proportion of her defence budget on major new equipment than did the USA, and a substantially higher proportion than any other of the 11 members of the Alliance covered by the survey. These figures also showed that in 1977 Britain devoted some 4.9% of her

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defence, a proportion exceeded only by the USA among the NATO members for which figures are available.

In 1979-80 the British defence budget is planned to rise by 3% in real terms from the previous 1978-79 figure; and a further 3% growth is scheduled for 1980-81, subject to review nearer the time in the light of economic circumstances.

BRITAIN'S FORCE CONTRIBUTION

Britain is the only European nation to contribute to each of the three elements of NATO's triad (strategic nuclear, theatre nuclear, and conventional); one of the two European countries to provide forces for all three major NATO commands; and one of the few countries to commit forces to more than one region of Allied Command Europe (ACE).

THE UK BASE

Britain's geographic position provides an important base for the conduct of operations in support of NATO strategy, and for the reinforcement of the Central and Northern Regions. The UK Base provides support for British forces assigned to NATO, including aircraft of RAF Strike Command which are available for operations in support of all three major NATO commanders. It provides base facilities for the Polaris force and for the American forces stationed in this country or brought in as augmentation forces. For the defence of the home base, units of all three Services are required. The Army is tasked to combat enemy operations and to guard key points and installations; the Royal Navy must keep open the Polaris submarine deployment routes and counter the mining threat to the approaches to the reinforcement ports; and the RAF is responsible for the air defence of the UK and the preservation of the integrity of the UK Air Defence Region of Allied Command Europe.

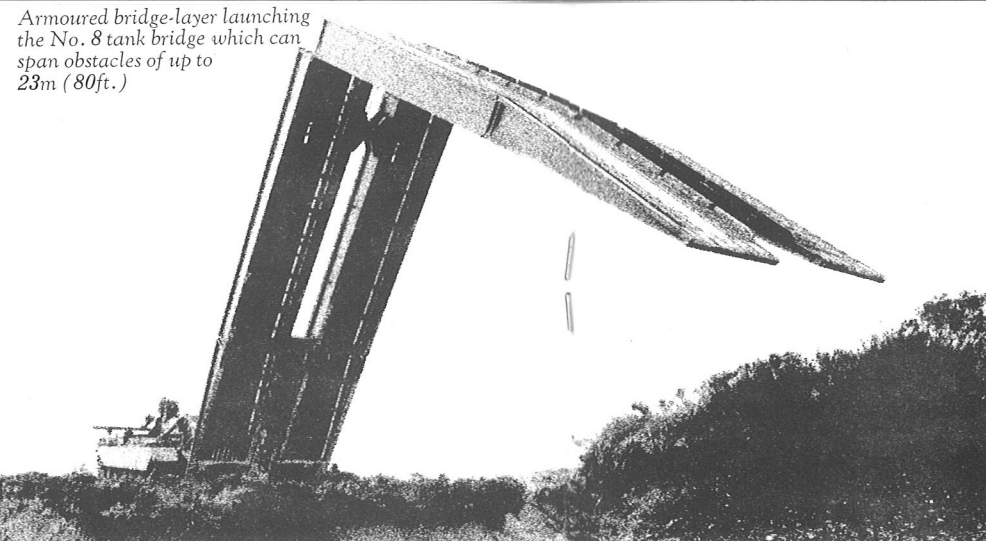
THE EASTERN ATLANTIC AND CHANNEL

The defence of Europe demands the passage of transatlantic reinforcements and the use of the seas around Europe for the deployment of forces. Britain has a vital role to play in the Eastern Atlantic and Channel

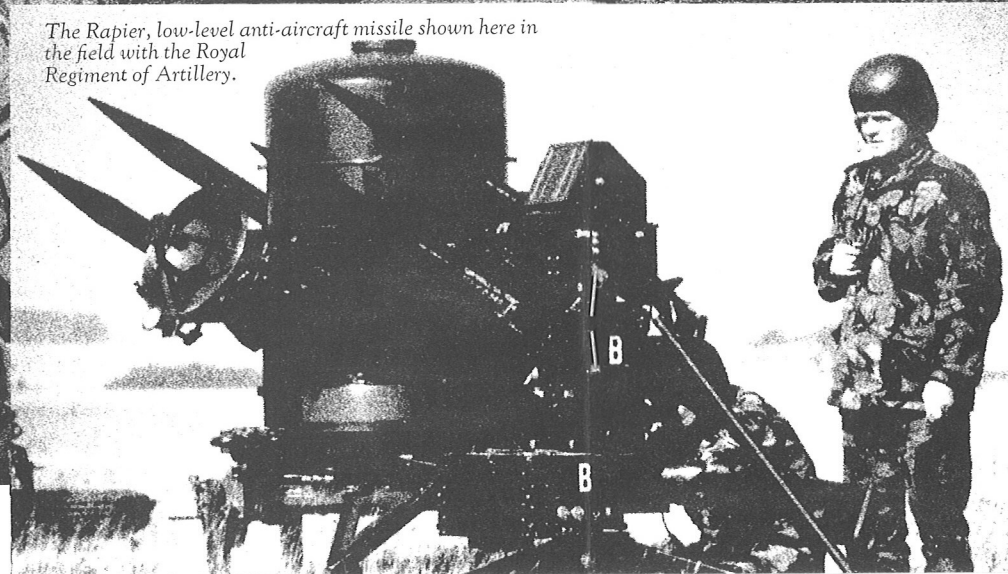
areas, since she contributes the largest part of the maritime forces readily available to the Alliance. The Royal Navy is the only Western European Navy to operate nuclear-powered attack submarines, of which there are 10 now in service, 3 under construction and a rolling programme for the future. In addition, we have 17 conventional submarines. Virtually the whole of the Royal Navy – the strongest European Navy in NATO – is earmarked for assignment to the Alliance, and permanent contributions are made to NATO's Standing Naval Force Atlantic and Standing Naval Force Channel and to periodic activations of the Naval On Call Force Mediterranean. Its ships include the aircraft carrier ARK ROYAL with its supersonic strike and air defence aircraft, the anti-submarine warfare carriers HERMES and BULWARK and the command helicopter cruisers BLAKE and TIGER, all of which can operate Sea King helicopters. The destroyer and frigate force comprises some 65 ships. The older frigates and destroyers are being replaced by three new classes, the Type 21 and 22 frigates and the Type 42 destroyers. 12 replacement ships are currently under construction. The new ship classes are being equipped with advanced weapon systems. These include the Exocet surface-to-surface guided missile system, the Sea Wolf close-range self-defence missile



An infantryman carrying the man-portable version of Clansman, the Army's new communications radio, and the new 4.85mm automatic rifle.



Armoured bridge-layer launching the No. 8 tank bridge which can span obstacles of up to 23m (80ft.)



system and the Sea Dart area air defence missile system. Two ships of a new class of anti-submarine cruiser are also under construction and a third order is planned. These will carry anti-submarine Sea King Helicopters and the Sea Harrier. Britain assigns to SACLANC and CINCHAN maritime patrol aircraft and Canberra reconnaissance aircraft. Britain also assigns to SACLANC Buccaneer strike/attack and Phantom air defence aircraft. The maritime patrol and combat aircraft are supported by Shackleton airborne early-warning (AEW) and Victor tanker aircraft which are available for the support of both SACEUR and SACLANC. The Nimrod is undergoing a major refit to improve its anti-submarine warfare capability and the UK is developing an AEW version of the aircraft to replace the Shackleton AEW force.

THE CENTRAL REGION

In the Central Region, the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) of 55,000 men makes a critically important contribution to forward defence within NATO's Northern Army Group. 1st (British) Corps, the combat element of BAOR, is equipped with over 600 Chieftain tanks and over 2,000 other armoured fighting vehicles including a new series of Anglo-Belgian tracked combat reconnaissance vehicles, the Scorpion and Scimitar, to be joined shortly by the Striker carrying the Swingfire anti-tank missiles. Artillery includes 105mm, 155mm,

and 175mm self-propelled guns assisted by field artillery computer equipment. Tactical nuclear support is provided by the LANCE missile and the 203mm self-propelled howitzer, while the Rapier missile system, Blowpipe and L40/70 gun provide air defence. The Corps has been restructured to make the most effective use of the next generation of weapons and equipment by improving the weapon-to-man ratio; in the process 16 additional company-sized combat teams have also been created. In time of war, BAOR would be reinforced to more than double its peacetime strength. The units temporarily redeployed in Northern Ireland could return to Germany within 72 hours.

Virtually all the RAF's combat and combat support aircraft are now assigned to NATO and over half those in the front line will be replaced in the 1980's by the Tornado Multi-Role Combat Aircraft. Twelve squadrons of RAF aircraft are based in Germany (2 ATAF) in the strike/attack, offensive support, reconnaissance and air defence roles with helicopter support for the Northern Army Group (NORTHAG). The RAF Germany Phantoms in the offensive support role have recently been replaced by a significantly increased number of Jaguars. This has allowed both UK and RAF Germany air defence squadrons to be re-equipped with Phantoms. RAF airfields in Germany are protected by Bloodhound air-to-surface missiles and by Rapier missiles operated by the RAF Regiment.

STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES

The British Polaris force, which maintains a continuous patrol at sea, is the only European contribution to the NATO strategic deterrent. Each Polaris submarine can remain on underwater patrol for long periods and is equipped with 16 Polaris missiles, armed with nuclear warheads. The Polaris force has many years of effective life ahead of it.

THEATRE NUCLEAR FORCES

Deterrence of massive aggression cannot be left simply to conventional and strategic forces. Otherwise NATO could be faced with an intolerable choice between conceding defeat and using dangerously excessive force at an early stage. In order to maintain a full spectrum of deterrence and present a complete range of defensive options, the Alliance also needs a variety of theatre nuclear forces, linked with conventional defence on the one hand and with strategic nuclear forces on the other. They must be capable of controlled, credible and effective employment. They must also be kept up to date and kept in a safe and secure condition in peacetime and war. To this end, NATO is undertaking a programme of modernisation which will ensure that these forces can help to counter the build up of Warsaw Pact capability,

without in any way reducing the role of conventional defence. For land and air forces, the UK contributes short range nuclear capable artillery, the LANCE surface to surface missile and nuclear capable aircraft. At sea, UK maritime forces are supported by nuclear capable aircraft and helicopters. When employed on nuclear missions UK aircraft and helicopters are armed with British nuclear weapons, in the form of bombs and depth charges respectively.



RAF Harriers, the world's first fixed wing VSTOL close support aircraft, pictured here in Germany.

SPECIALIST REINFORCEMENT FORCES

IN ALLIED COMMAND EUROPE (ACE):

a. **SACEUR's Strategic Reserve (SSR).** This consists of forces which can be deployed to any region of ACE to accomplish a mission detailed by SACEUR from a range of pre-planned options. The United Kingdom contributes Specialist Reinforcement Forces towards this reserve which include:

(i) **SACEUR's Strategic Reserve (Air) (SSR(A))** Three squadrons of Jaguar offensive support aircraft and the Harrier squadron. (The Jaguar squadrons have alternative deployments with UKMF (Air) and the Harrier squadrons may be deployed with the air element of the AMF).

(ii) **The United Kingdom Mobile Force (Land) (UKMF(L))** An airportable formation to be known as the New UKMF consisting of the 6th Field Force and Logistic Support Group, roughly equivalent in strength to a reinforced brigade group, and including a limited parachute capability of one battalion group.

(iii) **The United Kingdom Mobile Force (Air) (UKMF(Air))**

One Jaguar squadron and a support helicopter force of 22 Pumas.

(iv) **The Special Air Service (SAS)** Three regular squadrons.

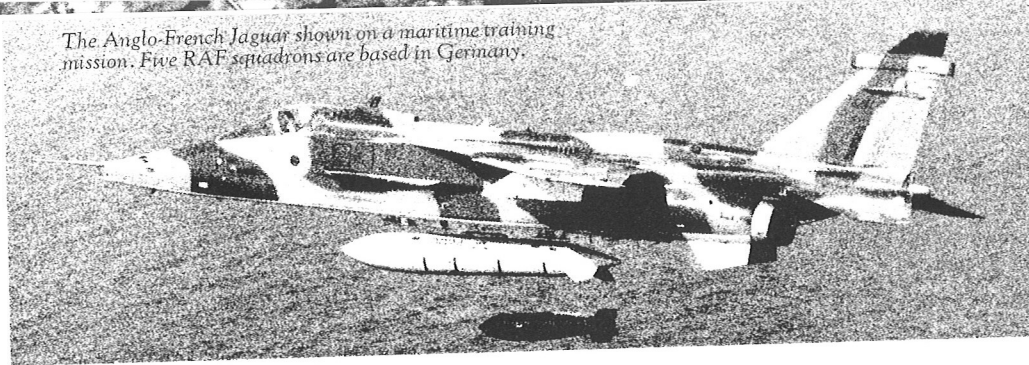
b. **ACE Mobile Force (AMF)** is a multi-national force formed to deter aggression by demonstrating the solidarity and determination of the Alliance. It comprises immediate reaction forces which are capable of speedy deployment to a threatened flank. The UK contribution is:

(i) **Land Element:** An infantry battalion group together with force troops, and support helicopters and a logistic support battalion.

(ii) **Air Element:** A Harrier squadron and 4 Puma helicopters with an 'on call' field squadron of the RAF Regiment.

IN ALLIED COMMAND ATLANTIC (ACLANT) a Brigade Headquarters and 4 Commandos, with units of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps also under command, together with associated amphibious shipping, combat, helicopter and logistic support, provide the only land force available to SACLANT for the defence of the Island Commands in the Atlantic. It includes mountain and arctic trained commando groups which are available to reinforce North Norway in all climatic

The Anglo-French Jaguar shown on a maritime training mission. Five RAF squadrons are based in Germany.



conditions and would normally be the first NATO reinforcements to arrive in the area.

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN BRITAIN'S CAPABILITY

Britain's contribution to the Alliance is being continuously improved and updated. Among the major improvements made during the last year or so are:

- a. A decision by the British Government in March 1977 to proceed with the development of a new airborne early warning system based on a modified Nimrod aircraft, to replace the current Shackleton force. The British system will aim to secure the maximum possible interoperability and compatibility with whatever AEW system NATO may eventually decide to procure.
- b. Orders for the following new war-

ships:-

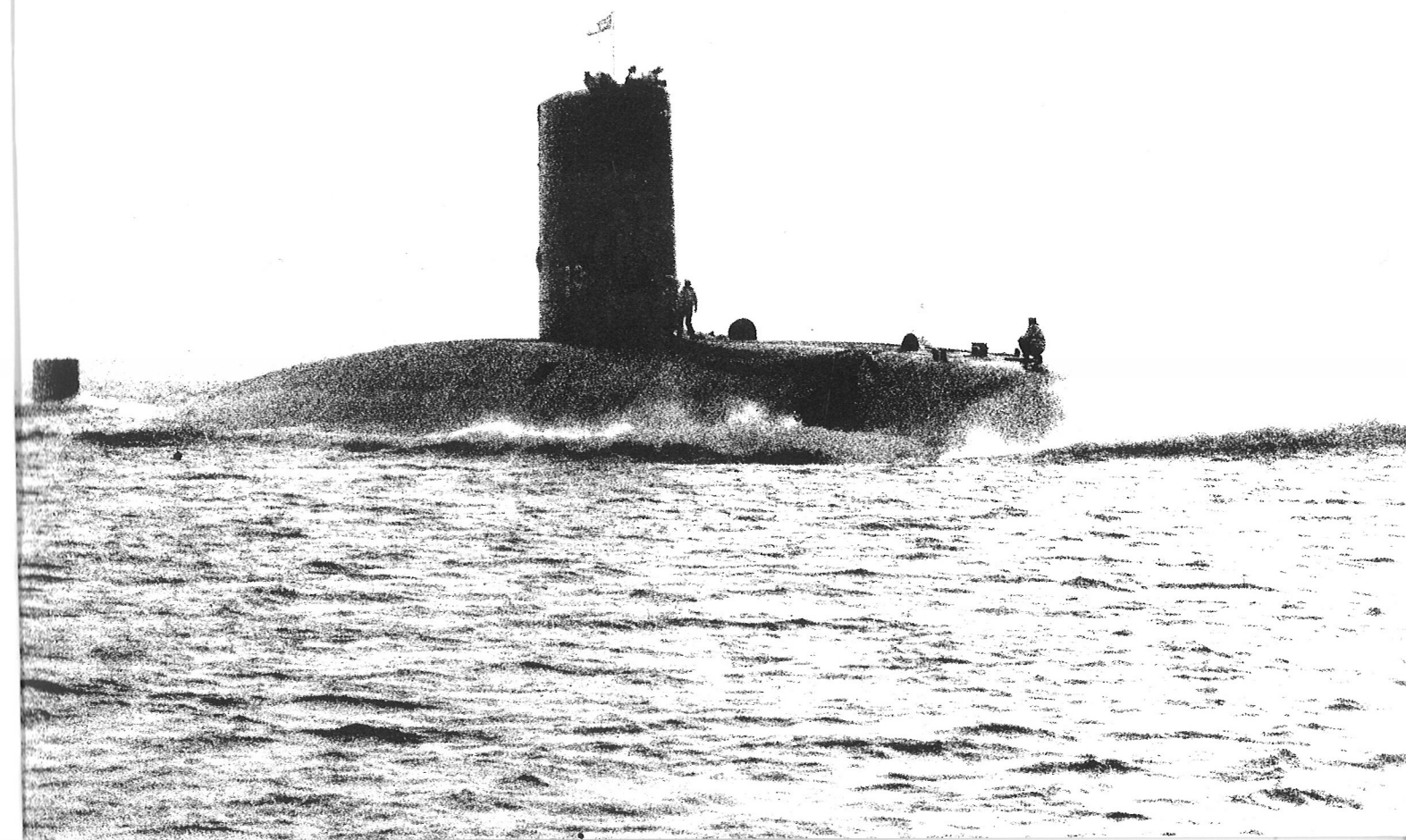
- 1 nuclear-powered Fleet submarine
- 2 Type 42 destroyers
- 1 Type 22 anti-submarine frigate
- 1 Mine Counter Measures Vessel
- 2 Island Class offshore patrol vessels.

c. Decisions to procure or develop the following missiles:

- (i) A replacement air-launched anti-ship missile for the Royal Navy and RAF.
- (ii) An improved version of Sea Dart, the Navy's area air-defence system.
- (iii) The TOW helicopter anti-tank missile for the Army.
- (iv) The Sidewinder AIM 9L short range air-to-air missile for the RAF.
- (v) The Sub-Harpoon submarine-launched anti-ship missile for the Royal Navy.

d. An order for the second production batch of 110 Tornado aircraft, being

HMS Churchill, entering the Clyde Submarine Base Faslane.
Britain now has 10 such nuclear powered fleet submarines in service.



procured jointly by Britain, Germany and Italy, of which 55 will be for the RAF. Britain is also developing an air defence variant of the Tornado. In total, the RAF plans to acquire 385 Tornado aircraft.

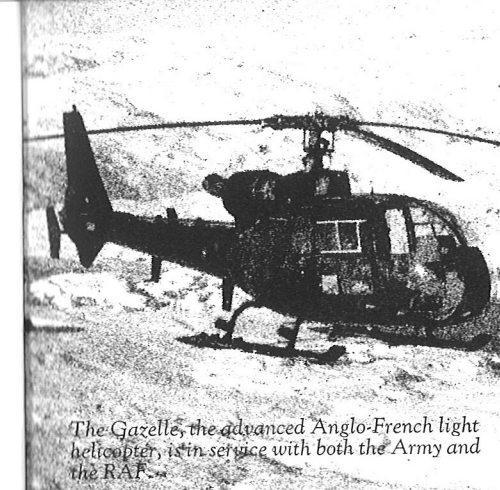
- e. The retention in service of 41 Commando, Royal Marines and its assignment to NATO;
- f. The restoration of HMS BULWARK to full operational status;
- g. An increase in the planned size of the Army by 1900 men;
- h. The purchase of 30 medium-lift Boeing Chinook helicopters.

In addition, Britain is also implementing a number of further measures in the context of the Alliance's call for improvements in anti-armour defence, war reserve munitions and readiness and reinforcement. These measures include the following:

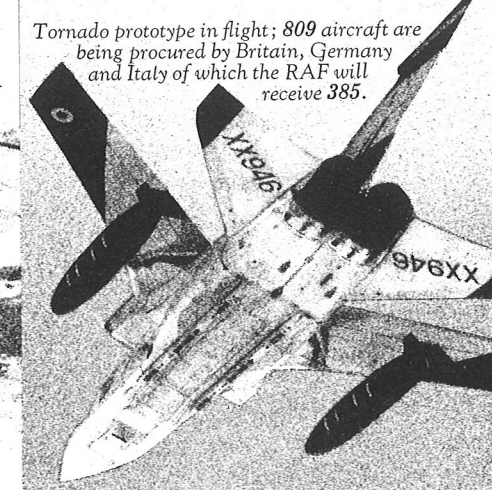
- a. A number of reserve helicopters have been earmarked to NATO for anti-submarine warfare;
- b. Certain naval communications and training aircraft have been earmarked for general maritime support and utility duties;
- c. The number of MILAN anti-tank missiles being deployed to front-line units in 1978 is being increased; the stock levels of other anti-armour equipment are being raised;
- d. Additional armoured, artillery and infantry units are being made available as reinforcements;

- e. Improvements are planned for reserve mobilisation and the reinforcement of BAOR;
- f. Medium-range air-to-air missiles and war reserve stocks of sonobuoys are being built up by the RAF;
- g. The wartime strength of RAF Regiment field squadrons in Central Europe is being increased;
- h. The rates of utilisation for the Harrier are being markedly improved; equipment for selected reinforcement squadrons will be pre-stocked.

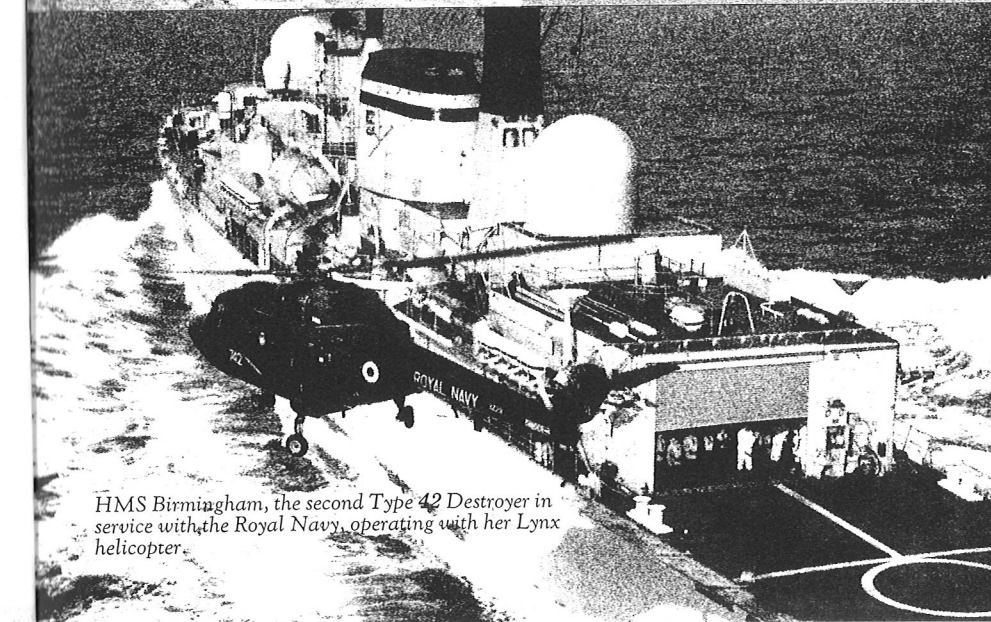
HMS Ardent, a new Type 21 frigate, at sea. Eight ships of this class will soon be in service.



The Gazelle, the advanced Anglo-French light helicopter, is in service with both the Army and the RAF.



Tornado prototype in flight; 809 aircraft are being procured by Britain, Germany and Italy of which the RAF will receive 385.



HMS Birmingham, the second Type 42 Destroyer in service with the Royal Navy, operating with her Lynx helicopter.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE IMPROVEMENT

The defence of the West is a matter for joint effort. During the past decade there has been a major change in the balance of contributions to NATO made by the European Allies measured against that of the United States and Canada. In 1968 the US and Canada had 3.6 million men and women in the Armed Services – compared with the 3.2 million in NATO Europe; by 1976 the US/Canadian figure was down to 2.2 million – almost a million below the European figure of 3.1 million. In peacetime the European members of NATO currently provide some 90% of NATO's ground forces in the European area, some 80% of the ships and 75% of the aircraft. Britain has played a leading role in the moves designed to enhance European defence efforts, and it was a British initiative in 1968 that led to the formation within NATO of the Eurogroup – now comprising Britain and all ten other European members of NATO, except France and Iceland – which provides a forum for the exploration and promotion of measures designed to improve the European contribution to collective defence and to achieve a more effective collective result from the available resources. In 1977, the Eurogroup countries spent the equivalent of some US \$50 billion on defence. Sub-groups of the Eurogroup, each concentrating

on a specific area such as training or logistics, make an important contribution towards the strengthening of the Alliance by increasing co-operation among its members. Many improvements are in hand in such fields as communications, aircraft cross-servicing and artillery – where in the next decade Americans, British, Germans and Italians will be using 155mm guns capable of firing each other's ammunition.

Britain attaches particular importance to the joint procurement of equipment in order to achieve economies and to increase fighting efficiency by enhancing the ability of allied units to operate together. Successful joint projects so far include the Anglo-French Jaguar aircraft, the Martel air-to-surface missile, the Lynx, Puma and Gazelle helicopters and the Anglo-Belgian family of armoured combat reconnaissance vehicles; agreements have been signed with the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy covering the production and continued development of the Tornado and good progress is being made in the development, with these two countries, of the self-propelled medium artillery piece SP70, the FH70 towed version already having entered production. Equipment collaboration also facilitates joint logistic support and training arrangements, like those now being discussed among the five European countries which have agreed to purchase the Lance surface-to-surface missile system

from the United States.

Much preliminary work in equipment collaboration has been carried out by the Eurogroup. However, at the end of 1975, Eurogroup Ministers agreed that the opportunities for joint procurement would be improved by being considered in a wider European forum. As a result the independent European Programme Group, of which the UK is a member and which includes France, held its first meeting in Rome in February 1976. The Group is now recognised as the main European forum for equipment co-operation and has made steady progress during its first two years. In an attempt to harmonise European equipment replacement intentions, comprehensive schedules have been prepared and studies are under way in eleven groups with the aim of collaborating in the development or production in Europe of equipments for NATO. A number of these groups are looking at the possibilities for future projects which will be of considerable industrial importance for Europe and, by preserving a high technology European defence industrial base, for NATO as a whole. These include a future tactical combat aircraft, military helicopters (to replace the present generation of Anglo-French aircraft) and future anti-tank missiles.

NATO AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS

Britain and its Alliance partners regard NATO's role in the search for detente as no less vital than in the field of defence and deterrence. Its members are committed to contributing towards the development of peaceful and friendly international relations. They pursue this goal in two main areas: first, by strengthening their own free institutions, and by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded; and second, by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. Attempts to expand the area of mutually fruitful co-operation with the countries of the Warsaw Pact are an important part of the efforts of members of the Alliance in this second field.

The forum for political consultation within the Alliance is the North Atlantic Council. The Council, which is supported by a Political Committee, an Economic Committee and a number of specialist groups, meets twice yearly at Ministerial level and regularly at the level of Permanent Representatives. The Ministerial meeting of the Council in May 1977 was held in London at the level of Heads of State and Government. The Allied leaders made it clear, in their communique on this meeting, that they would persevere in their efforts to lessen the tensions between East and West, and to increase progressively the areas of co-operation. They asked the Council in permanent session to

make a fresh study of long-term trends in East/West relations and to assess their implications for the Alliance. The study is now well advanced and there have been significant British contributions to it. It will be considered by the North Atlantic Council when it meets in Washington at the level of Heads of State and Government next May.

FH70, the new 155mm towed field howitzer jointly developed by Britain, Germany and Italy, which will enter service next year.



CONCLUSION

The comparative peace and stability which Europe has enjoyed during the past 30 years is testimony to the success of the North Atlantic Alliance. However, one of the underlying difficulties facing Western democracies today is that, the longer this peace continues, the more difficult it becomes to sustain the economic and social effort required to maintain modern and effective armed forces in peacetime. The challenge before NATO for the foreseeable future is to ensure that it can:-

- a. preserve the stability and cohesion of the Alliance and its members as effectively as it has hitherto; and
- b. continue to provide sufficient guarantee of security as the essential base from which to further the objective of lasting peace in Europe.

1977 was a year of renewed determination for the Alliance in both these areas. As a result of the NATO Summit in London, member nations were given a fresh stimulus to meet the military requirement in both the long and short terms. Signs have emerged in the field of detente and disarmament that real progress can be made, albeit slowly. The British Government is determined to sustain the major contribution made by British forces to the collective military effort, and to continue to play an active part in the all-important task of putting relationships throughout Europe on the basis of confidence and co-operation, thus extending detente, and giving it an increasingly solid basis.

Ministry of Defence,
London

April 1978

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The Rapier, low-level anti-aircraft missile shown here in the field with the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

