

Statement by the British Government on the European Defence Community (14 April 1954)

Caption: On 14 April 1954, in a statement in the House of Commons, the British Government outlines the commitments to the European Defence Community entered into by the United Kingdom.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Affaires étrangères. Communauté européenne de défense. Comité interimaire de la Conférence pour l'organisation de la CED. Correspondance diverse 1952-54, AE 11661.

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Declaration by the British government on the European Defence Community (14 April 1954)

Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland believe that the European Defence Community will be an essential factor in strengthening the defence of the free world through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and desire to establish the closest partnership with it.

Her Majesty's Government accordingly signed in Paris on May 27, 1952, a Treaty with the Governments of the member States of the European Defence Community, by which the United Kingdom is pledged, while it is a party to the North Atlantic Treaty, to afford all the military and other aid and assistance in its power to any member State of the Community which may be the object of an armed attack in Europe.

The United Kingdom has also entered into the following further commitments to the European Defence Community :

(1) In the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of May 27, 1952, the United Kingdom joined the other parties to the Treaty in undertaking to consider an armed attack on the territory of any of the members of the European Defence Community in Europe, or in the area described in Article 6 (i) of the Treaty, or on any of the forces, vessels or aircraft of the Community within that area, as an attack against all the parties to the Treaty.

(2) In the Tripartite Declaration of the same date, Her Majesty's Government declared, together with the United States Government, that if any action from whatever quarter threatens the integrity or unity of the European Defence Community, the two Governments will regard this as a threat to their own security and will act in accordance with the Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

(3) In the same Declaration the two Governments expressed their resolve to station such forces on the Continent of Europe as they deem necessary and appropriate to contribute to the joint defence of the North Atlantic Treaty area having regard, among other things, to their interest in the integrity of the European Defence Community.

Her Majesty's Government have to-day concluded in Paris with the Governments of the member States of the European Defence Community an Agreement regarding co-operation between the United Kingdom and the European Defence Community. In this connexion Her Majesty's Government hereby declare that –

(a) Their policy will conform to the conclusions agreed by the North Atlantic Council in December 1953. These were that the threat to the Western world remains, and that the Atlantic Community must be prepared to keep in being over a period of years forces and weapons capable of deterring aggression and of providing for the effective security of the North Atlantic Treaty area.

(b) The United Kingdom will continue to maintain on the mainland of Europe, including Germany, such units of its armed forces as may be necessary and appropriate to contribute its fair share of the forces needed for the joint defence of the North Atlantic area, and will continue to deploy such forces in accordance with agreed North Atlantic Treaty strategy for the defence of this area. Her Majesty's Government have no intention of withdrawing from the Continent of Europe so long as the threat exists to the security of Western Europe and of the European Defence Community.

(c) The United Kingdom will consult with the European Defence Community on questions of mutual

concern, including the level of the armed forces of the United Kingdom and of the European Defence Community placed under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, on the mainland of Europe, and any substantial modification in the level or composition of these forces.

(d) In order to promote the integration of the armed forces placed under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, the United Kingdom agrees to the inclusion, if the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, so requests, of British Army formations and Air Force units in European formations, and vice versa, where military considerations make it desirable and logistic considerations make it practicable. The United Kingdom will also join in developing a common policy in technical fields such as training, tactical doctrine, staff methods, logistics and standardisation of equipment.

Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom regard the Atlantic Alliance as fundamental to their policy and will do their utmost to keep it vital and strong. They can conceive of no circumstances in which they would wish to modify this policy or to denounce a Treaty which embodies their sense of fellowship with likeminded nations, responds to their own interests and serves so well to secure their general aims. They regard the North Atlantic Treaty as being of indefinite duration, and are confident that it will develop as an enduring association for common action between the member States in every field.

London, April the 14th. 1954