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Weapons of Mass Destruction Nuclear Warfare

### The Multilateral Force: America's Nuclear Solution for NATO (1960-1965)

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**Abstract:** This project concerns the politics and diplomacy of the American proposal to create a NATO multilateral nuclear fleet in the early 1960s and deals with the themes that emerge during its consideration within the Alliance. The Multilateral Force represented an American attempt to solve the "nuclear dilemma" which

statesmen and strategists believed would confront NATO following the end of the Eisenhower Administration. Western European allies increasingly pressed Washington to include the rest of NATO in the nuclear defense of Europe. The American answer was a plan to create a fleet of ships, bearing Polaris ballistic missiles carrying nuclear weapons, manned by multinational crews, and under NATO command and control. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy hoped that this fleet would provide their European partners with a greater sense of inclusion in nuclear defense matters. The Multilateral Force received significant attention in NATO circles throughout the first half of the 1960s, yet very little has been published on the proposed missile fleet. Moreover, with few exceptions, studies dealing with MLF were not informed by archival research inasmuch as most documents dealing with NATO nuclear policy were classified until quite recently. This account rests on archival research undertaken at the Public Records Office in London and the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland, and is the first study to make use of these recently declassified documents. Its purpose is to present an updated account of the international politics and diplomacy attending the Multilateral Force scheme, to show that these negotiations portray why the NATO alliance remained healthy, and to suggest its contribution to the outcome of the Cold War.

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