

CN 302

X/13 DEF -- NATO SETS UP GROUP FOR TALKS WITH MALTA

BRUSSELS, AUG. 22 (RFE SPECIAL/DYBVIK) -- THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE TODAY ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A SPECIAL GROUP WITH THE POWER TO CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA.

NATO HELD ITS FIRST OFFICIAL TALKS WITH THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT IN NOVEMBER 1965, AND IT WAS AGREED AT THAT TIME, THE CONSULTATIONS COULD BE REOPENED AT THE REQUEST OF EITHER SIDE.

MALTA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE COMMON MARKET G. T. CURMI, HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO LEAD THE MALTESE SIDE OF THE DISCUSSIONS.

OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN WOULD NOT DISCLOSE THE TOPICS EXPECTED TO BE DISCUSSED, BUT NATO SOURCES SAID THE INCREASED SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WOULD BE OF PRIME INTEREST TO BOTH SIDES.

SECRETARY GENERAL MANLIO BROSIO WILL HEAD THE SPECIAL OPEN-ENDED STANDING NATO GROUP WHICH WILL CONDUCT THE ALLIANCES SIDE OF THE TALKS WITH MALTA.

SOME MILITARY UNITS COMMITTED TO NATO, MAINLY BRITISH, ARE BASED ON MALTA UNDER AGREEMENTS REACHED IN SEPTEMBER 1964 AFTER MALTA GAINED ITS INDEPENDENCE.

1902/68

FOS/HI/1205

19