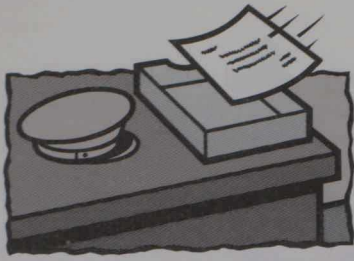


DEFENCE NOTES



B-2 Flies into Modernization Debate

■ On 17 July the B-2 Stealth bomber flew for the first time, however, at a cost of US \$530 million per airplane (\$70 billion for the proposed purchases of 132), the maiden flight ran into severe turbulence in Washington, where legislators debated the 1990 budget, and, more broadly, the future of US strategic forces.

In July the House Armed Services Committee voted to reduce the 1990 stealth bomber budget by \$1 billion, and to reduce the 1990 purchase from three aircraft to two. Even these planes cannot be bought, according to the House resolution, until the Air Force produces a plan to reduce the cost of the programme. The Senate resolution was considerably less restrictive, requiring that the Pentagon certify the B-2's airworthiness, and ability to penetrate Soviet bomber defences, but leaving the budget largely intact. A conference committee of the two houses is expected to reconcile these differences before the fall, but the statement of performance requirements imposed on the Air Force may take considerably longer to produce.

The debate over the B-2 is part of a broader debate between the Bush administration and Congress over the future structure of US strategic nuclear forces. In January President Bush announced a review of force modernization plans prior to the resumption of arms control negotiations with the Soviets. The review is now long overdue, but the shape of the US force structure is in any case emerging from the continued tug-of-war in Congress.

In an April compromise between the Pentagon and the

Congress, the single warhead Midgetman, which has few supporters in the Pentagon, was restored to the 1990 budget in exchange for the continued funding of the road-mobile version of the ten-warhead MX missile. In late July the House of Representatives voted first to halve funding for the deployment of the MX missile, and later, to kill the Midgetman. The double blow was a product of Congressional politics, not strategic analysis. When the Democrats voted to limit MX funding, Republicans retaliated by voting with liberal Democrats against Midgetman.

Led by New York Congressmen determined to save Grumman Aircraft's Long Island factory, the House further shredded the administration's defence budget by restoring funding to the F-14 fighter aircraft – one of only two major procurement programmes which Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney had been able to cut in his original budget proposal.

In testimony to Congress, Pentagon Chiefs have argued that without the B-2, US negotiators in Geneva would need to revise their negotiating position or even withdraw from the talks. President Bush, still without the conclusions of his strategic review, has claimed that he has established a "solid strategic program" which depends on the package of the B-2, Midgetman, MX, and the continuation of SDI. Adding his voice to the fray, on a July visit to Washington which included an appearance before the House Armed Services Committee, Marshal Akhromeyev, Special Adviser to Gorbachev, told reporters that, if the B-2 is deployed, "there will be a reaction on the part of the Soviet Union."

Picking Up the Pieces in Ottawa

■ Although the Mulroney government has not undertaken a formal review of defence policy following this year's budget cuts, various official statements indi-

cate the course of the painful reassessment now taking place in Ottawa.

Under the programme envisaged by the White paper, the Navy would have built towards a fleet of 28 combat ships, to include 12 frigates, 4 destroyers, and 12 nuclear-powered submarines. The acquisition of the nuclear submarines was partly at the cost of a third batch of six new frigates projected for the late 1990s. With the cancellation of the nuclear submarines, Canadian navy officers held out the lingering hope that the third batch of frigates would be restored. Speaking before a Commons committee in June, Defence Minister William McKnight dashed such hopes with the announcement that there would be no third batch of frigates. No decision has yet been made on a replacement for the three conventional submarines due for retirement.

Without the third batch of frigates, Canada will have 16 combat surface ships at the turn of the century, 4 of which will be 25 years old. If the conventional submarines are replaced only on a one-to-one basis, the Canadian Navy may end the century with fewer than twenty combatant vessels.

Also in June, McKnight told reporters in Europe that a decision on a small number of replacement tanks for Canadian forces in Europe will be made at the end of the year. Meanwhile, the government has scrapped White Paper plans to expand Canadian armed forces in Europe to divisional strength. The expansion to divisional strength was promised to NATO as compensation for the withdrawal of the Canadian commitment to reinforce Northern Norway.

Finally, DND has moved to augment the number of Aurora long-range patrol aircraft by purchasing three additional aircraft frames from Lockheed. Operating without the sophisticated electronic monitoring equipment of the Aurora, the new aircraft (to be called Arcturus) will take over Arctic sovereignty patrols, thereby

freeing the Auroras for operations in an anti-submarine warfare role.

Defecting Mig

■ In July, a Soviet Mig-23 operating from Poland lost engine power. The pilot turned the plane towards the Baltic, and bailed out, whereupon the plane recovered power, turned West, and flew across NATO airspace until it crashed in Belgium. The Soviets have admitted that they were unable to follow the aircraft on radar, and were unaware of its fate until informed by Western authorities. Unofficial sources have suggested that NATO aircraft might have been unwilling to shoot it down for fear that it might have carried nuclear-tipped missiles.

The incident may reinforce the Polish claim that there is a need for a European risk reduction centre which would permit rapid communication to avoid misunderstanding in such situations.

Lake Concrete

■ In July Western reporters were allowed to visit Kyshtym Industrial complex east of the Urals. Kyshtym has been the site of the main Soviet military reactor complex, although its ancient reactors are now being phased out. Among the horrendous errors in the handling of nuclear materials at Kyshtym, Soviet officials admitted to the existence of a radioactive lake, which they propose to fill with concrete.

The growing list of Soviet accidents and mismanagement of nuclear materials, now made known to the Soviet public for the first time, appears to have brought the nuclear allergy to the Soviet Union. At the People's Congress in June, representatives called for an end to all Soviet nuclear testing. After almost five months without testing, however, the Soviet programme resumed on 8 July with an underground explosion at Semipalatinsk. □

— DAVID COX