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Reference Papers

Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures

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THE CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

(Prepared in the Directorate General of Information, National Defence Department, Ottawa.)

The Department of National Defence was created by the National Defence Act, 1922.

The control and management of all matters relating to Canada's defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Defence Research Board and Defence Construction (1951) Limited are the responsibility of the Minister of National Defence. Certain civil emergency powers and the Canada Emergency Measures Organization are also within his jurisdiction. Matters of major defence policy for which Cabinet direction is required are presented before the Cabinet by the Minister.

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Canadian Armed Forces

The Chief of the Defence Staff controls and manages the Canadian Armed Forces and is responsible for maintaining an effective military force to meet defence objectives. As the Canadian military representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, he is also responsible for advice on all NATO military matters and acts as a military adviser to the Government and to Canadian delegations to NATO.

The present organization of the Canadian Forces evolved from the integration and subsequent unification of the three armed services. Before 1964, the Canadian defence forces conformed to the traditional pattern of three services reflecting the distinction between sea, land and air forces. In 1965-66, an integrated command structure for the field forces was established in which the four army regional commands, the two naval regional commands, and the five air-force commands were replaced by five major functional commands. All forces devoted to a primary mission are, in the new structure, grouped under a single commander, who is assigned sufficient resources to discharge his responsibilities.

The Canadian Forces are at present formed into National Defence Headquarters and six major functional commands reporting to the Chief of the Defence Staff.