

Supply—National Defence

What about their reconnaissance elements? Has the minister increased the establishment for helicopters? Has the brigade in Europe any more helicopters for reconnaissance? The minister has referred to Voyageur helicopters that he has acquired. How many has he acquired? We also know that he is going to get 15 Buffalo aircraft. Let me put it this way. Magazine articles tell us that the department is supposed to get 15 Buffalo aircraft.

Mr. Churchill: He did not give us any figures at all.

Mr. Lambert: No. If I can rely upon this aviation editor, the Canadian forces are supposed to get 15 de Havilland CC-115 Buffalos. Do we have to get our information from magazines or must we wait for the minister to give it to us in his own good time? This is not good enough. Rather than this general version it would be far better if the minister came out and told us precisely what he means by his mobile command, what he intends to do with it, how it is going to operate and how it is going to be equipped. We are being asked to vote money for the reorganization of our forces in a certain way but the descriptions, the roles and their equipment are all secrets locked in the minister's breast. The question arises of the mobility of this mobile group, the conversion of a further brigade to a sort of airborne brigade. I know that is a poor term but I refer to a brigade which will have an air capability or an air transportability.

Mr. Hellyer: They are air transportable.

Mr. Lambert: That is a very interesting point, particularly in the light of the announcement today in Paris by President de Gaulle who says that after April 4, 1969, any foreign troops on French soil shall be under French command. In other words, he is saying to NATO, get out, unless, of course there is a wholesale revision of the NATO structure. The question that bothers me at the present time is: Is this something new that the President of France has sprung on the NATO allies or is this something that has been discussed? Did the minister become aware of it at the time of the NATO ministerial conference last December? This would be interesting to know. Was there any prior indication of this? What planning is taking place to provide for such an eventuality?

We know it will wipe out Marville. It will wipe out Metz so far as we are concerned.

[Mr. Lambert.]

Does this mean that all our NATO forces overseas will be on West German soil or will they be relocated elsewhere? What is the effect of removing France from, shall we say, the area of manoeuvrability, because anybody looking at the map can see that West Germany is a very narrow country east and west? Look at its lines of communications. The laterals running north and south are primarily along the Rhine and anything reaching toward the frontier of East Germany is at right angles to the Rhineland communications so that there is no room to move. There is the greatest difficulty to manoeuvre. Again I ask, what plans have been made to deal with this? How are we equipping our forces?

Coming now to the CF-5, I do not intend to go into the great detail that the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre went into on Friday. Are any of these aircraft to be used in Europe? There is no indication yet. Are they simply tactical appendages to our mobile command? We know that our troops in Europe form part of our mobile command in so far as their composition is concerned and in so far as their organization and equipment are concerned. Are they going to have the CF-5 or are these units going to be kept in Canada to be sent out, with only the minister knowing about it, to the various areas where they may be needed?

May I refer the minister to the recommendation made in the 1963-1964 report of the Special Committee of the House of Commons on Matters Relating to Defence. On page 19, dealing with the NATO forces, there is the following:

Your Committee recommends—

Among other things.

—a long range force role study be immediately initiated to determine a most suitable future role for the air division when its present equipment becomes obsolete.

Then, further:

In view of the need for mobility, special consideration should be given to the allocation of a military air transport role for the air division.

Today these recommendations are as valid as they were then and make eminently greater sense. I think the minister recognizes some of the things that we must strive to get across, including the best possible mobility for our ground forces in combination with the air and sea forces. We want to know how the minister proposes to do this. He owes it to the country to tell us.