

The principal consultative body dealing with continental defence is the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, jointly presided over by two chairmen, who report directly to their respective heads of government. In 1978, the Board examined such issues as the improvement of North American air-defence systems, contingency plans for redeployment of U.S. military aircraft to Canadian bases in times of crisis, and the continued validity of the bilateral defence-production and development-sharing programs.

The agreement establishing the North American Air Defence Command, the best-known of Canada's bilateral defence agreements, is scrutinized periodically to ensure its continued effectiveness under changing circumstances. A Canada-U.S. study, agreed to in 1978 and expected to be finished by mid-1979, will consider the best means for ensuring the air defence of the North American continent for the next 20 years.

While combat preparedness is an obvious priority of Canada's bilateral defence relations with the United States, military and civilian teamwork in peacetime tasks of search-and-rescue, weather-reporting, civil-emergency planning and Northern research is a continuing commitment. Civil emergencies such as the re-entry over Northern Canada in January 1978 of the Soviet nuclear-powered satellite Cosmos 954 was an essentially civilian operation with the Canadian Forces providing support.

Military training assistance

An interdepartmental committee chaired by the Department of External Affairs administers the Military Training Assistance Program. Where positions are available, training is provided on request for armed forces personnel of certain non-NATO countries. The program provides basic officer, junior-staff and military-trades training courses.

In 1978, 85 candidates from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean were trained in Canada, of whom about 50 per cent attended officer courses.

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

For nearly ten years the United States and the Soviet Union have been engaged in negotiations seeking agreement to curtail the strategic nuclear arms race and begin the process of reducing nuclear arsenals. In 1972, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. signed initial agreements on the limitation of strategic nuclear arms (SALT I), and in 1974, at Vladivostok, they reached an understanding on the outlines of a further and more definitive agreement (SALT II). New proposals were put forward by the United States in 1977 and 1978 and, by the end of the latter year agreement was near, and expectation was being expressed that the SALT II treaty would be signed early in 1979.