

*Statements by Ministers*

old. The problem is so serious that we must either engage in a major rebuilding of our navy or give up even the pretence of being able to protect our waters. We have decided to introduce ship, submarine and helicopter replacement programs to build a modern and effective three ocean navy.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Beatty:** The navy vessels which we are planning to acquire, Mr. Speaker, will be delivered through the next decade and beyond and will last, and represent Canada's naval capability, well into the next century. Our studies have shown us that in that time frame the most effective way of conducting anti-submarine warfare operations in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans would be with a balanced Maritime force comprising surface vessels with helicopters, nuclear-powered submarines and Maritime patrol aircraft. This balance is now lacking.

Such a balanced fleet mix will also offer Canada the option of submarine operations under the ice of her northern waters.

Some have suggested that the proposed nuclear submarine program is driving the costs of the White Paper. Such a suggestion is untrue. The sort of submarine that we are contemplating will cost approximately the same amount of money as a modern air defence frigate.

The issue is not the cost of a particular type of vessel but rather the cost of replacing a navy on the verge of rust-out. The real question is whether Canada can afford to have a modern navy or, perhaps more accurately, whether a three ocean nation as dependent on trade as Canada is, can afford not to have a navy. The Government's response is clear.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Beatty:** Some people would suggest that we contract out the defence of Canada's waters to others. The Government is prepared to discuss co-operation in all aspects of the defence of North America, but we will not allow Canada's sovereignty to be compromised. We will be a partner with our allies and we will not be a dependent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker I will now turn to Consolidation in Europe.

To be credible, Canadian contributions to conventional deterrent forces in Europe, whether stationed in Europe or held in Canada as expeditionary forces, must be and be seen to be effective, available, supportable in action and sustainable over time.

Both our major land force and air force commitments to Europe—our stationed Mechanized Brigade Group, and our stationed Air Group on the Central Front in West Germany—and our Canada-based CAST Brigade group and Rapid Reinforcement Air Squadrons earmarked for deployment to North Norway—are currently unsupportable in action and unsustainable once committed.

The Government has concluded that the solution to these problems is consolidation into effective, supportable, sustainable land and air formations at divisional strength. The most careful consideration has been given to the political, military and economic implications of the choices open to us.

● (1220)

[*English*]

Once we had taken a decision to consolidate our efforts in a more effective and more focused way, we had essentially two choices: to concentrate on the northern theatre or on the central front. While consolidation in the North was appealing for many reasons, it was complicated by the fact that for reasons which we fully understand, Norwegian policy forbids the peacetime stationing of foreign troops in that country. Consequently, to focus on Norway would have required that we abandon the costly infrastructure that we had built in Germany, withdraw our troops from Europe altogether and try to develop workable arrangements to get troops to Norway if they became needed. This option simply would not have been sensible.

The best course for Canada in our view is to withdraw from our current commitment to send a CAST Brigade and two rapid reinforcement squadrons of fighter aircraft to northern Norway and to consolidate these forces if required in an emergency on our stationed land and air commitments in West Germany. We will continue, however, to provide a battalion group dedicated to deployment in the Northern European Command area as a contribution to the Multinational Allied Mobile Force, Land. The equipment for this battalion group will remain prepositioned in northern Norway and we will continue to exercise this and other forces with our Norwegian allies.

The Government has conducted intensive consultations in our consolidation proposals both within NATO and bilaterally with those of our allies that will be most affected by these adjustments. In general, the responses we have received are both sympathetic and supportive.

This change in the role of the 5th Brigade Group will require that it be newly equipped with main battle tanks and with other heavy equipment to fit it for operations on the Central Front. A large proportion of this equipment will need to be repositioned in West Germany. It will also be necessary to re-equip the 4th Brigade Group which will remain on station in South Western Germany with new tanks in order to maintain its effectiveness throughout the period of the White Paper.

Consolidation into land and air divisions and the addition of divisional elements will provide larger, more effective and more visible Canadian contributions to the conventional deterrent and defence needs of the Alliance in Europe. Most importantly, the fact that our commitments will be both honest and doable will send the message both to our friends and to the Warsaw Pact that Canada will be there if we are needed.