

Bay. A second landing strip will be built parallel to the main strip, and new buildings will be needed for an operations centre and for housing. Each country stationing planes at the base will build its own protective hangars and pilot-support infrastructure. The cost of major work is estimated at about \$500 million, with part to be paid by NATO.

The setting up of the NATO Tactical Fighter Training Centre would increase low-level flights and activities at the base considerably. The number of flights in 1987 topped 6,300. DND estimates that 140 to 170 combat aircraft from eight countries would take part in this type of activity between February and October each year, and that the base would record 40,000 sorties, with low-level flights accounting for 60 percent of the total. If DND forecasts are accurate, 3,500 employees and their families would be based at Goose Bay, and 500 pilots would train there each year.

Canada's proposed low-level flight and tactical training range covers 100,000 square kilometres in two tracts that contain no permanent settlements. The northern and larger tract is divided into three sectors straddling the Quebec-Labrador border, just to the north of Goose Bay, while the second also straddles the border, lying mostly in Quebec. In these vast areas, pilots can fly at about 30 metres (100 feet) for more than an hour, hugging tree tops and following the contours of the land. Restrictions will be very few, except those respecting wildlife and humans. Pilots may engage in simulated aerial combat and naval attacks. Finally, one or more firing ranges will probably be set up, although DND is quick to note that talks with NATO on this matter are not complete and techniques for simulating combat may eliminate the need for these ranges.

Major McCabe explains that DND is currently taking all necessary steps to avoid disturbing caribou herds and fishing and hunting camps. As a further precaution, anyone wanting to travel in these areas is asked to notify the base, so flight paths can be re-routed. These measures will be augmented if the centre is established.

NATIVES AND THE PEACE AND ECOLOGY GROUPS dispute the Canadian Forces' arguments. They claim that low-level flights are already harming the environment and affecting native lifestyle, and an increase in flights would endanger the ecology and inhabitants of the entire region. At this stage in the debate, the two sides are trading conflicting figures, evidence and statements, all of which are difficult to judge.

Opponents of the project make claims of frightened animals abandoning their natural habitat, disintegration of native culture, and the destruction of native lands over which jurisdiction has not yet been established. Supporters of the base argue virtually the opposite. More than twenty-five years of military activities at CFB Cold Lake in Alberta have demonstrated that wildlife does not disappear. In fact, the caribou population in Labrador has grown to almost 600,000 today (from 60,000 25 years ago), making it the largest herd in the world. The native population has been settled for several decades, and most of the Innu (Labrador), Inuit and Montagnais (Quebec and North Shore) live very far from the area used for low-level flights. A small number continue traditional activities and travel into "military" zones, but Major McCabe claims that flights cease or diminish in an area as soon as natives are observed. The natives' land claims, however, are not yet settled, and this appears to pose the greatest problem.

The natives are divided over the entire issue. The Innu are fiercely opposed to the project, especially because land claims negotiations continue to drag. The Montagnais (as the Innu are called in Quebec) and the Inuit, however, appear to be more flexible and willing to compromise, provided that their land claims are settled. They appear to view the militarization of their lands as secondary.

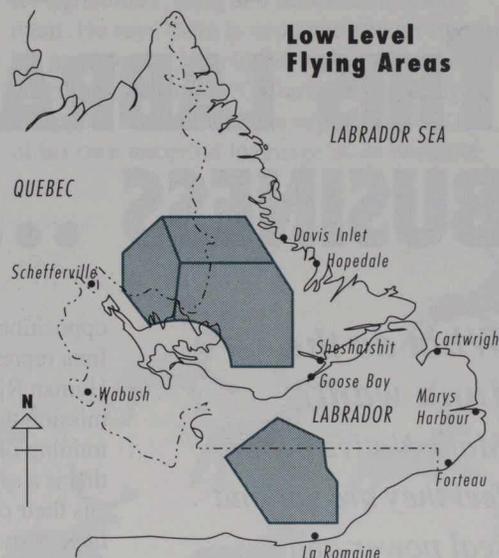
In an attempt to clear up the whole issue of present and future activities at CFB Goose Bay, Environment Canada created an Environmental Assessment Panel in July 1986, which held public hearings on the matter, then issued strict directives to be observed by DND in the environmental impact study it must produce to justify the NATO project. The study was contracted to a subsidiary of Lavalin Corporation, a company with a potential interest in building and equipping the centre. When this study is completed in November 1988, the Panel will examine the findings, hold new public hearings and, by September 1989, will make final recommendations to the two government departments involved.

Opponents of the NATO project consider the Panel a farce because, like all federal environmental review boards, it can only make recommendations. However, as the Panel's executive secretary, Carol Martin, points out, it can ultimately recommend that the NATO base not be established. The final decision will have to be made by the government.

Regardless of the outcome, Minister of National Defence Perrin Beatty has already

stated that the base will not halt present operations, since Canada has commitments to several NATO countries under the Goose Bay international agreement.

A SOLUTION MIGHT BE FOUND QUICKLY IF THE parties involved begin to negotiate seriously. Native land claims would have to be settled first to avoid political and jurisdictional problems. Then, safety measures would have to be strengthened, the extent of area used for low-



Source: Environmental Assessment Panel, Newsletter #1, November 1987.

level flights would have to be reviewed, and penalties would have to be introduced for pilots who violate these regulations.

Canadian and NATO military authorities can cite no military or technical justification for using such a vast area (equal to about forty percent of the area of West Germany) for flights and tactical training. Military sources admit that the southern range is needed only as a reserve in the event weather conditions prevented certain operations in the northern range. The latter is divided into three sectors, two of which may be closed at any moment; a fact that gives some indication of the military's real needs. In strengthening safety measures to prevent harmful effects on the environment and local residents, military authorities need to demonstrate beyond all doubt that violations of the regulations will be severely punished, otherwise it will be impossible to gain the co-operation of the inhabitants.

Low-level flights have become intolerable to the public in central Europe, and Canadians certainly would not want such flights over their towns and villages either. In solving this dilemma, every attempt must be made to respect Canada's commitments to both Western defence, and native rights. □