

DEFENCE NOTES



Post-Gulf War Defence Policies

■ The stunning success of the US-led coalition forces in the Gulf War has resulted in a number of national reappraisals of defence policy. In France, officials as well as defence critics have acknowledged that the war revealed the limitations of French ability to deploy conventional forces armed with sophisticated weapons in regional conflicts. In particular, Defence Minister Pierre Joxe publicly recognized the overwhelming dependence of the French forces on US intelligence: "It was the United States that provided – when and how it chose to – the most important information that we needed to prosecute the war."

The French have only one dedicated military satellite, and it cannot send detailed photographs to ground in sufficient time to provide immediate support to field commanders.

For satellite intelligence, the British forces appeared to rely entirely on the US. Despite favorable comparisons with the French performance, UK Minister of Defence Tom King announced that the British review of defence policy, *Options for Change*, would be placed on hold pending an assessment of the war.

In Washington, the exuberant response to military victory has not changed the long-term plan to reduce the size of the military. By 1995, the Army will comprise 18 divisions as compared to 28 in 1990, and the Air Force will be reduced from 36 to 26 fighter wings. These planned reductions are accompanied by a series of programme cancellations which include the Navy A-12 stealth fighter, and the decommissioning of two battleships, the Wisconsin and the Missouri, both of which saw service in the Gulf.

Despite the reductions, in testimony to Congress, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney has emphasized the need for US forces to be able to respond rapidly to "short-notice regional crises and contingencies that threaten US interests." In doing so, it is likely that considerable attention will focus on the advantages provided by military satellites. During the Persian Gulf War, US forces relied heavily on satellites designed to monitor Soviet territory for communications, warning of Scud attacks, and target locations (See *Defence Notes*, Spring 1991).

In the future, it appears that the new emphasis on regional conflict will be accompanied by the development of smaller, lighter satellites offering more flexibility and finely-tuned capabilities in support of expeditionary forces. These satellites will provide tailored intelligence analysis to field commanders, facilitate ground communications between different units even when they are in close proximity to each other, and incorporate further improvements to the Global Positioning System (GPS) which will not only allow ground units to precisely fix their own positions, but provide targeting data for precision-guided weapons and pinpoint accuracy to field artillery.

A Canadian Admiral Resigns

■ In late April, it became evident that the long-awaited revision to the 1987 Defence White Paper had not awaited the outcome of the Persian Gulf War. On 24 April, Vice-Admiral Charles Thomas, head of Maritime Command and Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, submitted his resignation some months in advance of his planned retirement. In a letter to Chief of the Defence Staff, General John de Chastelain, and in subsequent statements to the press, Thomas took issue with the fifteen-year defence plan apparently submitted to the federal cabinet for approval in February, but not yet approved.

Thomas' letter of resignation, and de Chastelain's reply, referred frequently to the proposal before cabinet. The implication from the letters is that among the recommendations made were the following: the re-equipping of "an expeditionary force brigade group" (the nature and composition of which was not specified) as a "priority investment"; by indirect references in Thomas' letter and the response from de Chastelain, the long-term development of naval forces to comprise twelve new frigates, four modernized Tribal-class destroyers, and an unspecified number of corvettes as a substitute for future batches of the frigates (corvettes were not explained in the correspondence, but are normally patrol ships smaller and less capable than frigates); the twelve mine-sweepers promised to the Navy Reserve; and a "modest" conventional submarine replacement programme "within a few years."

Thomas' principal objections to this policy centred on the submarine and corvette programmes. The proposal to buy corvettes, he wrote, was "a wrong and expensive choice of less capable surface ships," and the delay in the submarine programme meant that Canada was surrendering its sovereignty over the undersea water space surrounding its territory. Thomas argued that the priority given to a new expeditionary brigade group was misguided, and called for a public debate on defence policy.

In his reply, which was supported by new Defence Minister Marcel Masse, de Chastelain took strong exception to Thomas' dismissal of the proposed new brigade group. In an unusual acknowledgement that the 1987 White Paper was "out of step with changing geopolitical circumstances and unaffordable," he argued that "we must offer the Government the broadest possible range of military options" to meet future security requirements. Specifically, de Chastelain noted that the Navy would receive forty percent of capital expendi-

tures over the fifteen-year period as compared to thirty-three percent for the Air Force and twenty-seven percent for the Army.

Implying that the funding base for the fifteen-year programme would follow the pattern of the last several years (suggesting, therefore, that planning is based on a constant defence budget with no after-inflation increases in defence spending), de Chastelain noted that the programme placed before cabinet was deemed to be ninety-five percent fundable over the planning period. An essentially zero-growth defence budget was reflected in the 1991–92 Main Estimates released in February. Excluding special funding for the Gulf task force and the Oka crisis, defence spending increased by a nominal five percent over the 1990–1991 budget, indicating a more or less constant budget after inflation.

NORAD Renewal, Intermittent Radars

■ Whatever the future of the Canadian Navy, the Air Force will continue to operate within the framework of the North American Aerospace Defence Command. On 19 April, the government announced that the NORAD Agreement will be renewed for a further five-year period at the time of its expiry on 12 May.

Future North American radar surveillance, however, will need to make do with considerably reduced services from two OTH-B (over-the-horizon backscatter) radars, which the contractor, General Electric, turned over to the US Air Force in 1990 at a cost of \$1.2 billion. After an initial, controversial decision by the Air Force to dismantle, "pack and store," the radars, in early April, a compromise was reached. The East Coast OTH-B in Maine will be operated for forty hours each week (hostile aircraft will need to guess which forty hours), and the West Coast facility will be turned off and maintained by a skeleton crew. □

– DAVID COX