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REPORT

ON THE CANADA - HUNGARY TRIAL "OPEN SKIES" OVERFLIGHT

JANUARY 04-06, 1990

Dept. of External Affairs  
Min. des Affaires extérieures

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Background

In preparation for the "Open Skies" Conference, Canada and Hungary jointly conducted a trial "Open Skies" overflight during January 04-06, 1990. The purpose of the overflight was to test the flight planning and safety procedures which will be crucial when an "Open Skies" regime is established.

As "Open Skies" overflights could follow a wide variety of routes that may be quite different from those used by normal civilian aircraft, and may also feature considerable variations in altitude, existing civilian air traffic control procedures will have to be modified. Preliminary research has shown that these modifications need not be excessive or expensive. In fact, the modifications required would relate primarily to "streamlining" existing bureaucratic mechanisms for handling international air traffic so that requests for overflight clearances on complex and unique routes can be dealt with expeditiously by national authorities.

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With the "Open Skies" Conference fast approaching, the need to identify the main technical requirements of a system for processing overflight requests led both Canada and Hungary to examine the possibility of staging a trial overflight. Since the trial was intended to test procedures, it was felt that the aim could be accomplished without prejudice to the issues that are still being debated by interested nations from both the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. After consultations, it was decided that a Canadian military aircraft would overfly Hungary in early January. The Government of Canada has extended an invitation to states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization to conduct a reciprocal overflight of Canadian territory. Hungarian authorities have expressed interest in the idea, the formalities and timing of which to be decided at a later date.

While every effort was made to ensure that this overflight reflected as closely as possible the air traffic control procedures that might be agreed to in an "Open Skies" Treaty, it was recognized that the greatest lessons would be derived from the flight if extra time were taken at each stage of the process to evaluate each activity immediately. Thus, the periods devoted