

No. 61/10 Strengthening Canada's Preparedness

Statement by Prime Minister Diefenbaker in
the House of Commons, September 7, 1961

... It will I believe assist Honourable Members in their discussions during the next few days if I, and the Minister of National Defence, inform the House at this time of certain decisions taken by the Government. This is not intended to take the place of the more comprehensive statements of ministers on estimates, including a statement I will be prepared to make on emergency measures when estimates dealing therewith are under consideration.

The international situation has deteriorated since we last met, and tension has increased. Much of this has arisen from the statements of Premier Khrushchov in respect of the intentions of the Kremlin and attitudes toward West Berlin, and allied questions. The Government, after consultation with allied governments in NATO, has come to the conclusion that certain measures should be taken to strengthen Canada's preparedness for defence both at home and overseas.

We have decided to increase the overseas and naval forces assigned to NATO as follows:

(a) To bring RCN ship complements up to the strength necessary for a prolonged emergency, the present complement will be increased by 1749 officers and men.

(b) Strengthen the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group in Europe by a total of 1106 all ranks, and make readily available in Canada 1515 as reinforcements.

(c) Strengthen the RCAF No. 1 Air Division in Europe by a total of 250 officers and men.

To allow for the strengthening of the Brigade and Air Division in Europe, and for further strengthening, over and above the foregoing, and Order-in-Council has been passed increasing the present ceiling on personnel strength in Europe from 12,000 to 14,000.

The increases to NATO-assigned forces will be accomplished by transferring fully-trained personnel now in home establishments.

In addition, to improve the general military effectiveness of our forces at home, and particularly those earmarked for the strategic reserve and available for use in Europe, it is intended to increase the strength of Army formations by 8950 personnel and Air Force units by 989.