

DEFENCE NOTES



Implementing the White Paper

■ One of the important proposals in the White Paper, largely unnoticed in the debate about nuclear submarines, concerns the annual review of defence policy. In effect, the Government has established a rolling five-year expenditure plan for defence – “rolling” because each annual review updates the defence plan and projects it five years ahead. It remains to be determined how closely the annual assessment and the five-year plan will follow the proposals set down in the White Paper itself.

During the summer Perrin Beatty made it clear that the first review – due in the early fall but clearly delayed by continuing Cabinet discussions about funding implications – would include the request for authorization of the second batch of frigates. According to the Minister, this request would be for funds over and above the two percent real growth promised in the White Paper. The second batch of six frigates, and the new helicopters, which are an essential complement to the frigate programme, may cost around \$10 billion. But in reviewing the request, Cabinet must at the same time approve a five-year spending plan for defence in which the purchase of nuclear submarines looms large. During the summer, the Minister said that the choice of submarine would be made early in 1988, a date which has since slipped to the spring. The project definition phase, ending in the choice of a Canadian prime contractor, will follow in about a year.

How much will the defence plan cost? Reports now indicate that the

actual proposals in the White Paper would require five percent real growth for fifteen years, somewhat more than indicated in the White Paper which suggested that the policy would require two percent real growth with intermittent “bumps” for special programmes. The Cabinet is faced, therefore, with a policy question which goes beyond the actual decision on the second batch of frigates. Should the annual review modify the White Paper in the light of financial realities, or does it simply provide the five-year framework in which the White Paper decisions are implemented?

Nuclear Submarines

■ The nuclear submarine acquisition programme faces difficulties other than the threatened cancellation of the programme by the two opposition parties should they win the next election. Warning shots by US Congressman Charles Bennett, known to be close to the US Navy, suggest that Congress may insist on reviewing the potential transfer of technology to Canada (the British Trafalgar class submarine uses a nuclear propulsion unit derived from 1950s US technology). Whether or not the Reagan Administration approves the deal, says Bennett, Congress may assert its legal claim to review the transfer. Although the US Administration has been studiously neutral about the decision, some informed observers maintain that the US Navy is not sympathetic to the plan, and would much prefer that Canada concentrate on supporting allied efforts to ensure naval superiority in the North Atlantic, where the principal US deficiency is in frigates and destroyers.

The cost of the submarines is also still at issue. Indications are

that the Department of National Defence now estimates the total cost at around \$8 billion, but even this estimate may be well below the final cost if the Government sticks to its plan to buy between ten and twelve submarines.

On the other hand, Canada is not the only state to conclude that it has a need for nuclear submarines. Brazil has recently acknowledged that its naval research programme has moved significantly ahead in developing the technology for a nuclear submarine propulsion system. The Brazilian Navy plans to build the first submarine by the mid-1990s, which would about coincide with the Canadian timetable. Unlike the Brazilian civilian nuclear programme, which is conducted in co-operation with West

Germany, the naval nuclear submarine programme is not safeguarded, which means that Brazil will not allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspections or monitoring of the programme.

The CF-18

■ The extraordinary cost and complexity of modern weapons systems has been brought home once again by the trials and tribulations of the CF-18. In addition to the recent crashes involving the CF-18, a series of technical difficulties have plagued it. These have ranged from bulkhead fatigue problems to the current concerns about the engine and the continuing unreliability of the inertial navigation system. Despite the crashes, the attrition rate of the

ALLIANCE NEWS

Franco-German Co-operation

■ In exercise ‘Cheeky Sparrow’, conducted in mid-September, 20,000 French troops from the Rapid Reaction Force moved to reinforce the German Second Army Corps before being relieved in turn by the Second French Corps which is permanently stationed in southern Germany. The exercise had considerable practical value – different equipment, procedures and maintenance make it very difficult for the two armies to operate in concert. But there was also political significance. The French forces were placed under the command of the German Second Corps, and, at lower levels, units from the different national forces were combined under both French and German commanders. The exercise effectively reinforced the declared political statement that “both countries form a common security zone.”

At the end of the exercise the two governments announced the formation of a bilateral Defence Council, emphasizing that a variety of such arrangements are compatible with the multilateral framework of NATO. Other countries are not so sure: Italy was invited to consider participation, but noted that it preferred to operate in the multilateral framework and to emphasise US-European co-operation rather than to promote intra-European arrangements.

Aftermath of the INF Agreement

■ As the superpowers moved laboriously towards the INF agreement, the NATO Council met in California to consider the military implications of the withdrawal of the nuclear-tipped Pershing IIs and cruise missiles. Suggestions to compensate for the removal of the NATO missiles included the increased use of submarine or ship-launched nuclear cruise missiles, which are not covered by the agreement, and the use of