

monitor the activities of fishing boats and to participate in search and rescue operations. Since at any one time, some aircraft are being used for training, are undergoing maintenance checks or are in transit, heavy demand is made upon the remaining operational aircraft. Indeed, most of the Aurora airframes have already passed the 5,000-hour mark of flying time and have already undergone a major overhaul. The proposed purchase of six additional Auroras announced in the 1987 White Paper on Defence would have alleviated the problem somewhat, but this was cancelled as a result of the April 1989 budget. The subsequent announcement of the purchase of three Arcturus aircraft similar to the Aurora, except for the lack of anti-submarine equipment, promises to provide some relief since these aircraft can be used for training and surveillance flights, including those in the Arctic where the submarine detection equipment is not required, thus freeing the Auroras for other duties. The decision to allocate some Canadian Forces Challenger jets to general surveillance tasks will also help to alleviate the burden placed on the Auroras.

During its investigations at CFB Comox on Vancouver Island, the Committee was briefed on Aurora operations in general and in particular those of 407 Squadron, the only Aurora squadron on the West Coast. With only four aircraft, 407 Squadron has a heavy load, being responsible for anti-submarine patrols in the Pacific and some of the Arctic surveillance flights, as well as search and rescue missions and some fisheries surveillance flights on the West Coast. The fact that training and major maintenance facilities are located at the other Aurora base in Canada, CFB Greenwood in Nova Scotia, complicates 407's task. The use of Auroras in the monitoring of foreign fishing activities off the Pacific coast and the tracking of oil spills highlights the versatility of the aircraft for general surveillance of all Canada's coastline. Military briefers, however, also emphasized the need to maintain the anti-submarine capability and expressed concern that the updating of the submarine detection equipment of the Auroras due sometime in the 1990s might be delayed. There was also concern about the workload faced by Aurora crews at a time of limited resources and pilot shortages. However, the skill and dedication of Aurora flight and maintenance crews are still of a high order as demonstrated by the victory in the fall of 1989 of an Aurora crew from 415 Squadron in the annual international anti-submarine warfare competition for the Fincastle Trophy.

The fact remains, however, that Canada's air surveillance capability is limited because of the large area which has to be patrolled and the small number of aircraft available to carry out this duty.