

## 17. MAJOR EQUIPMENT ACQUISITIONS

### BACKGROUND

The austerity measures instituted by the Canadian Government in the 1989-1990 budget had a significant effect on both planned and ongoing defence equipment acquisition programmes. The need for the Department of National Defence (DND) to reduce planned expenditures by \$575 million resulted in the scaling back, rescheduling, postponement, or cancellation of a number of capital projects.

### *Projects Cancelled*

*Nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs):* Perhaps most significant was the decision to cancel the ten to twelve SSNs called for in the 1987 Defence White Paper. The Government's cost estimate for this project was \$8 billion, to be spread over twenty-seven years. Two classes of submarines were being considered for the purchase: the British Trafalgar-class SSN, designed by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.; and the French Rubis/Amethyste-class SSN, designed by Société de Navigation Atomique (SNA).

The decision on which SSN to purchase was originally set to be made in early 1988. This would have led to the first vessel coming into service in 1996 to begin replacing Canada's three Oberon-class submarines. Analysis is now being undertaken to determine the best possible fleet mix that could be acquired within current budget restrictions. This may include the purchase of conventionally powered diesel electric submarines or possibly a hybrid design submarine.

*Long-range patrol aircraft (LRPA):* The White Paper commitment to purchase at least six new Aurora LRPA to supplement Canada's current fleet of 18 Auroras was cancelled. This purchase was estimated to cost \$450 million. On 30 June 1989, however, Defence Minister McKnight announced the purchase of three Arctic and maritime surveillance aircraft. These aircraft, to be called "Arcturus," share the same airframe and engines as the Aurora and will supplement the current Aurora fleet's duties. The total cost of the project will be \$260 million. The Arcturus differ from the Aurora in that they will not be equipped with submarine-detection equipment. They will have radar and long-range communication capabilities for surveillance, patrol, and search-and-rescue duties.

*Tracker aircraft update:* The planned \$300 million upgrading of the nineteen Tracker medium-range patrol aircraft in current service will not go ahead. These planes operate out of Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Summerside in surveillance and search-and-rescue roles. They will be retired by 1992.

*CF-18A aircraft replacement:* The planned acquisition of thirteen to twenty-eight CF-18A fighter aircraft to replace those lost through peacetime attrition was cancelled. DND was reportedly looking to purchase the aircraft from Australia to take advantage of its current F-18A production line. The F-18A is no longer produced in the United States, as it has been outdated by the F-18C/D models. Delivery of the last of Canada's original purchase of 138 F-18As took place in September 1988.