

well into the 1990s. Then the level will stabilize at sixteen frigates (a 20 per cent reduction from the current force of surface ASW vessels). But even this assumes that the follow-on to the CPF, not yet approved by the government, will receive the required sanction.

Figure 2 also shows how many surface combatants would be available to Canada should the CPF follow-on not be approved. Projected dates of retirement shown for the older vessels take DELEX into account. Plans for a mid-life update of the Auroras and replacement of the three submarines are no more definite than those for the CPF follow-on. Current spending-projections do not offer any prospect of increasing the numbers of either of these weapons platforms.

Even under the most optimistic assumptions — 3 per cent real increases in the defence budget until 1987, higher proportions of capital expenditures as a percentage of the total, and approval of both the CPF and its follow-on — the ships and aircraft at the disposal of MARCOM by the mid-1990s will be fewer than at present. It would be 2007 before the maritime forces regained the current number of major weapons-platforms (LRPAs, frigates and submarines) under DND's current long-term programme for capital spending.

One could argue that the added capabilities of the newer ships compensate fully for the decrease in numbers. This is a specious argument in the view of the sub-committee. Certainly, the capability of the ships in general will have improved, but so have those of the likely foe, which has also added to the numbers of its ships. The relative ability of MARCOM to deal with opposing forces, beginning from a base of inadequacy, will under current plans remain at best constant.

Sheer numbers alone also have a certain importance; ships, aircraft and submarines are simply means of taking weapons where they are needed when they are needed. The number of such platforms must bear some reasonable relationship to the area to be covered. Otherwise, no matter how up-to-date the few weapons platforms available, having the appropriate weapon in the right place at the right time becomes a case of blind luck.

Canada reached the present state of continuing decline in its maritime forces because there has been no naval construction for fifteen years; no construction in significant numbers for twenty years; and no adjustment in the defence budget to take account of these facts. The country is now confronted with two problems: the necessity of replacing virtually the whole fleet at once; and the need for a short-term solution to a lack of numbers, while the longer-term objective of acquiring more capable weapons-platforms is pursued.

Planning for the future

There is no easy way out. Canada's maritime forces need substantially more money for capital acquisitions. They need it now, and it cannot be acquired at the expense of the air or land forces if the latter are not, in turn, to hit bottom. It is clear that the current formula for financing has not worked and will not work.

Decisions need to be taken now which recognize that our maritime forces are inadequate for their intended purposes; which determine the required force levels and the desired fleet mix; which take into account the need to compensate quickly