

## DEFENCE NOTES



### Military Lessons of the War

■ In mid-July, the Pentagon transmitted to Congress an interim report on the Persian Gulf War. Amid stories that its writing provoked some hard-fought inter-service fire fights – did the M1A1 tank deserve as much ink as the F-117A stealth fighter? – the report identified some of the weaknesses of Desert Storm, as well as its successes. Some of the latter are well known: high-technology fighters, satellite navigation, communications and intelligence, precision-guided bombs, and the NATO training exercises gave the coalition forces an overwhelming advantage on the battlefield.

On the other hand, the report acknowledges that the circumstances of the Gulf War favoured the coalition. Saudi Arabia provided excellent ports for the military build-up with little or no risk that the Iraqis could interdict supply lines. The five-month lead-up to the beginning of hostilities allowed the coalition to sort out crucial command and control issues. Perhaps most importantly, the open desert terrain was an ideal environment for air operations against the Iraqi army, leading very quickly to a situation in which the Iraqis were cut off from re-supply, and unable to move on the battlefield.

### Gulf Wars and Star Wars

■ While the lessons of the Persian Gulf will undoubtedly lead to many changes in US military planning, ranging from tactical satellites for battlefield commanders to better equipment and training for the removal of old-fashioned mines, some major strategic debates have also emerged from the experience. In early August, Pen-

tagon officials were quoted as suggesting that Iraq might still have two to three hundred Scud missiles. The Pentagon report to Congress acknowledged the great difficulty and cost of locating mobile missiles. And in his preface to the report, Defense Secretary Cheney declared that the Gulf experience reinforced the case for both the B-2 bomber and defence against ballistic missiles.

On 16 July, in a speech in Washington delivered on the same day as the Gulf War report, Cheney repeated his support for the Star Wars project with unusual fervour:

It's absolutely essential that we develop now the capacity to defend ourselves, the continental United States, our troops overseas and our friends overseas against the ballistic missile threat.... I'm convinced we can do it from a technical standpoint. I'm convinced it's an absolutely urgent national security requirement.

Cheney received support from an unexpected quarter, but not possibly of the kind that he wanted. The Senate Armed Services Committee, following a crucial reversal of position by Chairman Sam Nunn and the Democrat majority, declared its support for a limited, ground-based ballistic missile defence. In doing so, the Committee rejected the administration's approach, which is centred on the deployment of a space-based system using swarms of small, "smart" interceptors (Brilliant Pebbles). In theory, Brilliant Pebbles will defeat even a full-scale nuclear attack by intercepting the hostile missiles before they re-enter the earth's atmosphere.

By contrast, the Senate proposes to deploy one hundred ground-based missile launchers in North Dakota, at the location which is a permitted site under the 1972 ABM Treaty. Limiting the deployment to one hundred launchers means that there would be no violation of the ABM Treaty, although Senator Nunn has also proposed that negotiations begin with the Soviet Union to amend the Treaty

in order to permit the deployment of a more extensive system. Compared with the administration's plan, estimated to be ready at the end of the 1990s at a cost of US\$ 40 billion, the Senate proposal would cost US\$ 10 billion and be completed by 1996.

### Flight From Goose Bay

■ Much more so than the space-based Brilliant Pebbles, the deployment of a ground-based missile defence system in North Dakota has important consequences for Canada. Pentagon sources indicate that the minimum area to be defended would reach far into northern Canada, ending around Churchill, Manitoba, while the maximum plausible defended area with only one site could extend far into the Canadian Arctic.

These issues may well be addressed in the long-awaited revision to the 1987 Defence White Paper. In the meantime, public comment on defence issues has focussed mainly on base closings, as regional Members of Parliament from all parties have pleaded with the government to save local bases. In mid-summer, however, as the government continued to be tight-lipped on which bases might be closed, one long-term tenant decided in any case to leave.

In July, the US Air force left Goose Bay, Labrador, casting a long shadow over the future of the historic base. More recently known because of the controversy over low-level flying, Goose Bay was at the centre of the nuclear debates of the early 1960s. As a base already occupied by the US Air Force, and guarding the vital air approaches to the northeast seaboard, Goose Bay was the first US priority for the deployment of air defence nuclear weapons. Canadian archival materials from the Diefenbaker government also indicate that Strategic Air Command wanted to store nuclear bombs at the base for "reflex strikes" – B-52 bombers which would return from their first attacks, reload at

Goose Bay, and take off again for the Soviet Union.

According to official documents obtained by the St. John's *Sunday Express*, in February 1989, the Canadian Government announced new fees for all foreign users of Goose Bay, amounting to a doubling of the charges for the US Air Force to \$ 12.1 million. The latter resisted, and threatened to leave the base, but in May 1990, the Canadian government repeated its position that the US must pay the increased fees. In July 1991, the US Air Force carried out its threat and went home, ending almost fifty years of occupancy. Commenting on the future of the base, Marcel Masse said, "It's not in our mandate to pay for things we don't need... If the need disappears, the base disappears."

### Canada and NATO

■ Seeking to define its place in Europe after the Cold War, at the end of May the NATO Ministerial Council announced a drastic downsizing and reorganization of its multinational forces. Troop strength will be reduced by half to approximately 750,000. These forces will be reorganized into seven corps based in western and central Europe, and a rapid reaction force under British command. The rapid reaction force will comprise four divisions, two of which will be British and one American, and be able to respond to a crisis in five to seven days.

The announcement made no mention of the future of Canadian forces in Europe. Speaking in Berlin in early June, Prime Minister Mulroney indicated that Canada's military presence in Europe would be reduced, but added that "Canadian forces will remain as long as there is a residual threat to European and Canadian security here and as long as we are needed and welcome." He gave no hint of the form that a continued Canadian military presence might take. □

– DAVID COX