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## An Overview

While the Governor-General is the nominal Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in Canada just as is the Queen in the United Kingdom, real direction is similarly firmly in the hands of elected officials. The Prime Minister and his Minister of National Defence are the officials primarily entrusted, but there is also a Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, made up of all parties represented in the House of Commons, whose existence makes any abuse of military power very remote.

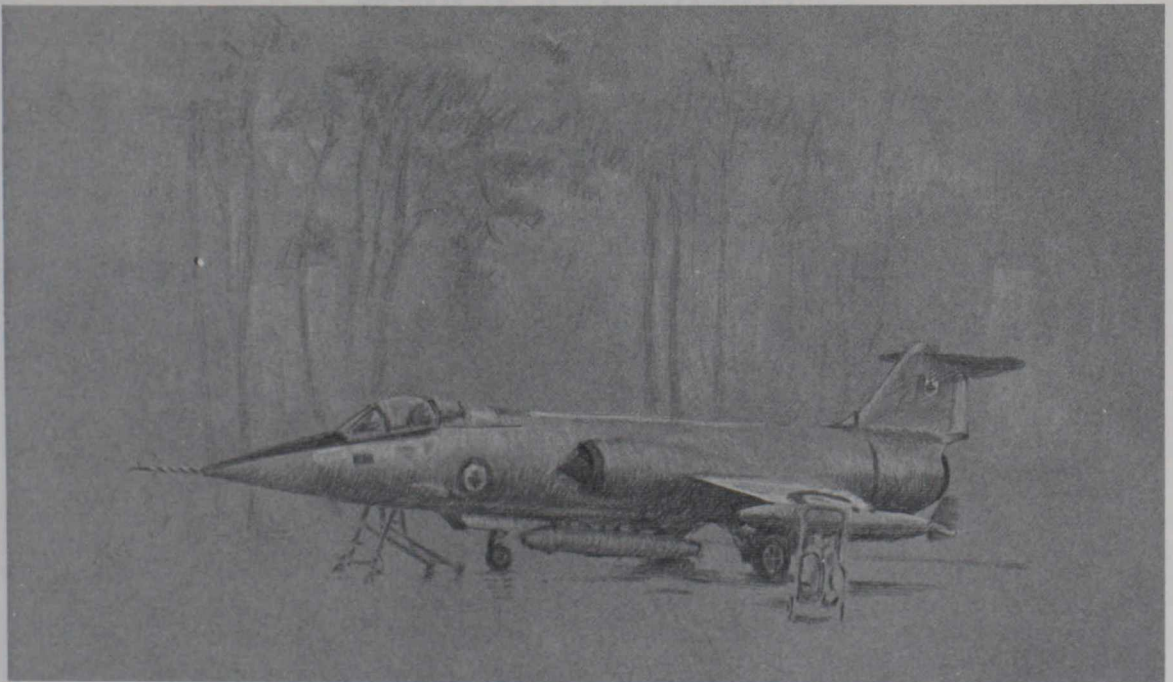
We are on the threshold of the 1980s, a decade which Minister of National Defence Gilles Lamontagne predicts will be 'difficult and turbulent', but for which he reaffirms the present government's commitment to defence alliances. In a statement to the Standing Committee he declared:

*'Our strategically advantageous location, taken together with the closeness of our ties with Great Britain and later with the United States, made it logical and natural for successive Canadian Governments to provide for Canada's military security through various forms of defence association with*

*these and other countries with which Canadians continue to share common interests, values, and aspirations. By assisting other countries in their defence and by sharing with them in the defence of the sea approaches to North America, Canadians contribute to keeping war away from Canadian territory.'*

Admiral Robert H. Falls, former Chief of the Defence Staff and now Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, views the 1980s with somewhat more trepidation. He believes that the coming decade will be the most dangerous since the 1930s. He is not alone. Both Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan, have been pressing hard for universal nuclear disarmament and international arms limitation, believing that it is only through these policies that the threat of global destruction and chaos can be defused.

That is not to say that the reasons behind their avid beliefs are entirely altruistic. Canada stands sandwiched between the two mega-powers in the nuclear club, the Soviet Union and the United States. As the Defence Minister observes,



CF104, 1st Air Division, Lahr, West Germany, by Robert Field 1968. (Black and white conté)