

NAVAL FORCE

In my statement to the Defence Planning Committee, which you will recall is the Council-level committee of the 14 member nations participating in the integrated military command organization, I supported the consensus that qualitative improvements in our committed forces would constitute reasonable and prudent action at this time, and I discussed several measures that we are taking along this line.

For example, I mentioned the four helicopter-equipped destroyers and the two operational support ships now under construction. Since there has been some discussion about these vessels and their relation to NATO, I should like to explain to you our present plans for employing them after their construction is completed and they are commissioned into the Canadian Armed Forces. First of all, although support ships contribute a great deal to NATO's anti-submarine capability by enabling our ships to spend a higher proportion of time on active operations, they are not normally earmarked to NATO but remain under national command even in wartime. On the other hand, the four new destroyers would in the normal course of events be earmarked to the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) when they become operational. When this takes place, we plan to remove four of the older destroyer escorts from the list of forces now earmarked to SACLANT and retain them in the Canadian Forces for North American defence purposes only. Thus we are not at this time planning any increase in the number of ships committed to SACLANT, nor are we planning any extension in the normal area of operation of our NATO committed maritime forces (for example, in the Mediterranean), and our allies have been fully informed of our present intentions. The new destroyers will, of course, provide significant qualitative improvement in SACLANT forces. In discussing our contribution to SACLANT, I also referred to our destroyer-modification programme, and pointed out that this too would lead to qualitative improvements in NATO's anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

LAND FORCE

I drew attention to our programme of re-equipping the Brigade Group in Germany, and indicated that we were giving high priority to its completion. This programme includes, for example, a substantial number of new reconnaissance vehicles, some new counter-mortar radars, a large number of new wheeled vehicles, and completion of the stockpiling of certain kinds of ammunition.

I pointed out that our reserve forces would be enhanced through improvements in training facilities and increased training intensity, and that we intended to continue the training of reserve personnel with the Brigade in Europe.

I announced that we had decided to participate in the 1969 exercise of the NATO ACE Mobile Force (Land) in the northern regions of Norway, as we had done on two previous occasions. We shall be providing a battalion group for this exercise, and we shall at this time also practise the strategic air and sea operational deployment of the unit to Norway.

AIR FORCE

Finally, I stated that we had deferred the final decision regarding our planned 20 percent reduction in the number of aircraft in the Air Division in Germany. I might add that, in private discussions with several of my NATO colleagues, I learned that Canada's reassurance regarding the Air Division was particularly appreciated.

To clear up one or two misconceptions about the Air Division, I should like to remind you that the CF-104-equipped squadrons are dual-capable, and we have available now in Europe stocks of conventional ordnance for these aircraft. They are capable of making an effective contribution to the strategy of flexible response adopted by NATO a year ago. This is a conception that we support in principle and one that we have catered for in our committed forces. The Canadian Air Division is among the finest in NATO, and I should not hesitate to stand it beside any such formation in the world. Our CF-104 pilots, supported by the whole of the complex organization of the Air Division, have repeatedly taken the honours at NATO training competitions. The same applies to our ground forces in Europe — there are none better. When I spoke in Brussels, I mentioned that our military forces were all professionals, and I assured our allies that we were maintaining them at their high standard of equipment, training, and operational readiness.

On the defence side, the main purpose of the meeting two weeks ago was to reaffirm alliance resolve, in the aftermath of the Czech crisis, to stand together against aggression directed at any of its members, and to consult on specific measures being taken to ensure that the necessary defences are maintained, Canada joined with the other members of the alliance both in reaffirming this intention and in maintaining and improving Canada's defence contribution, as I have outlined to you.

CANADA'S SECURITY AND NATO

While I am before you, I should like to say a word or two about Canadian security in relation to NATO. The major threat to the security of Canada and the Canadian people comes from the prospect of an intercontinental nuclear exchange arising out of a conflict of interest or of ideology between the super-powers. The forum where super-power interests most closely impinge on each other is Europe, and hence Europe is the geographical region where Canada's security is most in jeopardy. Thus, Canada's security is very closely interlocked with the security of Europe. These are inescapable facts of the world we live in. In the past, we considered it to be in the interests of Canadian national security to meet the challenge through our participation in NATO. How we meet the challenge in the future is one of the very important considerations of the defence review. But I ask you to remember this — the defence review cannot remove the challenge.

Perhaps I might finish by repeating to you my closing remarks to the Defence Planning Committee two weeks ago. At that meeting I said: "The Czechoslovak affair has demonstrated to all of us the