

News of the arts



The aircraft flown during Exercise Maple Flag at CFB, Cold Lake, Alberta during the spring are (from left to right): CF-104, CF-5, CF-101, F-15, A-7, A-4, and another CF-5. Behind is a C-130, and HH-3 and CH-53 helicopters.

pilot's main consideration is avoiding base housing, homes of sensitive citizens, and a few nearby turkey farms and mink ranches.

At Nellis, fighters share the route to the combat range with airline traffic, under the strict guidance of the Federal Aviation Agency.

New tactics practised

Maple Flag mixed high and low altitude flying, depending on the mission and the threat.

Effective groundfire forced low flying aircraft higher during the Vietnam conflict. Now a new, and in some cases untried generation of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), is prompting pilots to stay at lower altitudes again.

Two of the fighter pilot's worst enemies, SAM missile and anti-aircraft artillery threats, played an important part in Maple Flag exercises, although the Cold Lake range doesn't boast the sophisticated array of threats and targets available at Nellis.

Portable threat simulators operated by USAF technicians were set up in two locations on the range. Using video cameras and electronic sighting methods, the technicians recorded their share of kills (aircraft judged to be within missile

or gun range for too long).

Maple Flag was a trial exercise. But both sides expressed hopes of seeing it repeated, perhaps as early as next fall.

The potential offered by Cold Lake's uncluttered skies and large isolated range is tremendous. Air combat training, much like that conducted at Red Flag, could have a permanent home in Canada which

might even be shared with other NATO nations.

Whatever the future of Maple Flag one thing is certain. Cold Lake has earned a new significance on the international military map.

(The foregoing is from a report by Lieutenant Wendy Tighe for Sentinel, Volume 14, Number 3.)



Close-up of Canadian Forces aircraft CF-104s, on the flight line.