

# NATO



Canadian Forces, Sgt. Margaret Reid

## A mixed-nationality NATO flight crew plans its next mission.

Canadian representatives vigorously pursued this idea in Europe and the United States. As a result, Article II of the North Atlantic Treaty — often referred to as the “Canadian Article” — reflects Canada’s vision of an alliance enhanced by non-military forms of co-operation.

Since that time, Canada’s commitment to NATO has been unshakable. In the words of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada’s quest for peace and stability “continues to be best pursued through co-operation with our allies. This is a recognition of our common history, our shared interests and our community of values. This unity of purpose is the very foundation of our Alliance, as important to our security as the concrete efforts we undertake to keep the peace.”

Canada’s unique geographic circumstances — sandwiched between the two great superpowers — mean national interest in East-West relations is particularly strong. Joe Clark underlined Canada’s vulnerability in a speech last fall. “We are in the path between the superpowers,” he said.

“Changing our policy does not change our geography and, since we can’t wish missiles away, we owe it to our own safety to maintain institutions which control them, or which bring their numbers down.”

But membership in NATO gives Canada more than a voice in the world’s nuclear club. Membership is an important component of Canadian credibility in Europe. Joint defence through NATO has also been an economical answer to Canadian defence needs: history shows that it is infinitely more costly to fight a war than to act co-operatively to prevent one.

## Winds of Change

Today, changes in the Soviet Union and some of its allied states are altering the tone of East-West dialogue. President Gorbachev’s actions in human rights and arms control have brought the world to a historic juncture. The two superpowers have agreed to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons and have made significant progress on a treaty to reduce their nuclear arsenals by approximately 50 per cent. A new sense of purpose is evident in negotiations to ban entirely chemical weapons. Perhaps most importantly, new negotiations on

conventional arms, aimed at establishing a secure and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels, are now under way in Europe.

Encouraged by the progress of arms negotiations, Canada sees an unprecedented opportunity for NATO to forge a more stable international environment. But while popular opinion in the West has tended to focus on reducing nuclear weapons, Canadian analysts share concerns over the significant imbalance between the conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact countries and those of NATO. Eliminating this imbalance is pivotal to further reductions in the Alliance’s theatre nuclear arsenal. Yet each successful step in today’s negotiation process adds to the sense that East and West

are better able to resolve issues through a process of dialogue and compromise. Negotiations to reduce both nuclear and conventional forces have never had a better chance for success.

As NATO begins its 41st year, Canadians applaud its many successes, the enduring vitality of the organization and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The peace it has achieved has contributed much to Canada’s well-being and confidence in the future.

## NATO helicopters fly past a castle in the Bavarian Alps.



Canadian Forces, Vic Johnson