

DEFENCE NOTES



Changes in Canadian Defence Policy Announced

■ The long-awaited Defence White Paper was tabled in the House of Commons on 5 June. Although the major provisions of the White Paper came as no surprise, having been discussed extensively by DND officials in the months prior to release, the policy statement confirmed major changes in Canada's defence posture.

CANADA PROPOSES TO PURCHASE ten to twelve nuclear-powered submarines, which are intended to give the Canadian Forces the capability to operate in three oceans – the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Arctic. At present, only nuclear submarines have the capability to operate under the ice for extended periods of time. The unit purchase price of the submarines is around C\$500 million, but the actual operating costs are uncertain, since they involve building various complex facilities to refuel the nuclear power plants and maintain the subs.

A SECOND BATCH OF SIX NEW frigates will be built as projected, but the third batch may need to be cancelled to make way for the nuclear submarines. This means that in the year 2000 Canada will have sixteen surface combat ships, and perhaps four or five of the new submarines, with the total rising to the projected dozen by about 2010.

CANADA'S MARITIME PATROL AND anti-submarine warfare capabilities will be further improved by the purchase of additional Aurora long-range patrol aircraft (currently there are eighteen), and new medium-range patrol aircraft to

replace the aging Trackers now in service. The White Paper also confirmed the previously announced decision to acquire new anti-submarine warfare helicopters for the frigates.

A CHANGE IN CANADA'S NATO policy was contained in the decision to drop the commitment to reinforce northern Norway in times of crisis. Canada had previously undertaken to send one light mechanized brigade to northern Norway, which would be transported by air and sea. The decision to abandon the commitment reflects the military view that the brigade either could not be transported in time to help deter a conflict, or that, if hostilities began, the brigade would be excessively vulnerable.

TO REASSURE NATO ALLIES THAT there will be no reduction in Canada's overall commitment to Europe, the brigade in question will be re-equipped to bring it up to full capability as a mechanized brigade, and be committed to reinforce the existing mechanized brigade in Germany. Not all brigade personnel will be kept in Germany, but a divisional headquarters will be established, and military equipment will be pre-positioned so that the remaining personnel can be flown across to join up with their equipment.

A LIMITED NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL CF-18s will be bought to compensate for attrition, and the Canadian Air Group in Germany will increase its strength.

A MAJOR FACE-LIFT FOR THE Reserves is planned. Naval reserves will have an active role in coastal defence and minesweeping. The increases in the number of army and air force reservists suggest that the part-time soldier may play a larger role in Canada's future defence policy.

WHILE THE WHITE PAPER DOES not deal fully with how these changes and purchases will be paid

for, it is agreed that if all the changes described are implemented, it will require large increases in the defence budget.

Canada's Strategy for the Pacific

■ Traditionally, Canada's naval defence effort has been concentrated on its east coast, in keeping with the priority accorded to defence of Europe and the North Atlantic sea-lanes. In recent years all three of its submarines, its four most modern destroyer escorts, two-thirds of its operational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) frigates, most of its Aurora long-range maritime patrol aircraft, and all thirty-two Sea King ASW helicopters have been based in the Maritimes rather than at Esquimalt, on Vancouver Island.

The situation is beginning to change, however, as the Pacific Ocean acquires increasing military-strategic importance and Canada begins to orient itself away from Europe. Part of the reason can be attributed to new deployments in the area by the US Navy – in particular, the stationing of new Trident ballistic missile submarines at Bangor, Washington, and plans for the "homeporting" of an aircraft carrier battlegroup in nearby Everett. This in turn has attracted the close attention of the Soviet Pacific Fleet, now the largest of the USSR's four fleets. Soviet attack submarines were recently reported to have entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca, between Vancouver Island and Washington State, in an effort to keep tabs on the Tridents.

The Canadian Government has already begun to respond by shifting more of its active-duty naval forces to the west coast. Last January, Defence Minister Beatty announced that HMCS Huron (a modern, helicopter-equipped destroyer) and four Sea Kings would be transferred from Halifax to Esquimalt this summer. The Huron's presence as a command

and control ship will for the first time permit the creation of an independent Canadian task force in the area. Further bolstering of Canada's Pacific fleet can be expected in the future. The new submarine programme, for example, has been specifically designed to allow the stationing of at least one vessel on the west coast.

Early Deployment of Strategic Defences?

■ Since US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger announced that a limited form of SDI could be deployed by 1994, there has been considerable debate over the plausibility and advisability of such a plan. In February 1987 the George C. Marshall Institute published a study describing a possible early deployment strategy. The Institute outlines a three layer defensive system based primarily on kinetic kill vehicle technology. Unlike more exotic systems like lasers and particle beams, kinetic weapons rely for their killing power on the ability to hit the target with a solid object. The first layer would be spacebased and would intercept Soviet missiles in their boost phase. The other two layers would be based on the ground and would attack the missiles and their warheads in midcourse and terminal phases.

Critics of early deployment proposals based on these technologies have suggested that the system will be vulnerable to countermeasures such as space mines (designed to destroy satellites in earth orbit), fast-burn boosters (which would reduce the length of time the missile is vulnerable to attack) and decoys (used in hope of confusing or overwhelming the defensive system).

A similar idea for a simplified defence system known as "High Frontier" was put forward by the Heritage Foundation in 1982. Documents released in early May