

First, the air division. Our air contribution at present consists of eight CF-104 Starfighter squadrons, six of these squadrons are located in Germany in the nuclear strike role. In addition, during the past year these squadrons have been given a conventional bombing capability. The remaining two squadrons in France fulfill a reconnaissance role. All are fully equipped for their assigned missions and the division is now part of the NATO alert system.

As was stated in the 1964 white paper on defence we do not plan to acquire a further order of CF-104 aircraft and consequently, the numbers of these highly complex and expensive planes will decline through the years as the result of normal attrition.

As hon. members are aware, both the air division headquarters and No. 1 wing are located in France at Metz and Marville respectively. The recent decision by France in regard to foreign troops on her soil will, of course, make it necessary to consider the best manner in which to reorganize the air division. A study is under way jointly between officials of the Department of External Affairs and the Department of National Defence, and the results will be considered by the government as soon as they are available. It is expected that this study will make it possible to realize savings in manpower and money to meet other requirements, and at the same time permit the air division to continue to make a contribution to the stability of the European theatre. As is well known, the professional calibre of our air and ground crews are second to none in the world. In fact, I do not think it is any exaggeration to say they are unmatched in the European theatre as is evidenced by their consistent winning of air firing and air bombing trophies. Canada's NATO air division has established an international reputation of which all Canadians may be justly proud.

The Fourth Canadian Infantry Brigade Group. Our other formation in Europe, No. 4 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group is also a first class outfit manned by excellent soldiers, 4 C.I.B.G. is being significantly re-equipped with new and modern weapons such as anti-tank guided missiles, mortars, bridge laying tanks, armoured personnel carriers, command post vehicles, cargo tracked vehicles, and 5-ton trucks, plus communications equipment. In addition, we recently announced plans to procure a number of 155 millimeter self-propelled howitzers, the last remaining major equipment deficiency in the brigade group at this time.

As long as Four Canadian Infantry Brigade Group is assigned to a pivotal position on the central front in Europe, it must be well equipped for its mission.

Then the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force. While I am discussing our contribution to NATO Europe, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a word about what we are doing in regards to the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force known as ACE Mobile Force; a special force directly under the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The role of this force is to be prepared for quick application in response to any aggression on the NATO flanks or any other contingency. Our commitment to this force is one battalion group. The professional capability of our forces was dramatically demonstrated in February and March this year when more than 1,000 Canadian servicemen took part in a major test of the ACE Mobile Force in Northern Norway.