

60 per cent of Canada's land mass is accessible only by air. This is a very different kind of country from most of the densely populated lands of Europe. Vast distances, long supply lines, difficult terrain and harsh climate are normal, and there are enormous areas where human activity is meagre and where it is difficult to maintain and promote the national presence. Air services are the normal mode of movement throughout these regions. Only military air transport would be capable of delivering troops and supplies to many points if lodgements or other incursions by foreign powers were ever made during crisis periods or wartime.

Even in southern Canada, air services are the predominant mode of transport for long-distance travel. People can fly from Halifax to Vancouver in one day: it takes virtually a week by train. Air fares are competitive with rail and road fares over any distance beyond four hundred kilometers, and the mass of business travel between Canada's major cities consequently takes place by air. This situation is paralleled in the armed forces, which have dockyards, bases, airfields, radar sites, command posts and other facilities spread across the country from St. John's in the East to Esquimalt on the West Coast and a host of other points elsewhere. Air transport is vital for command and control and for the movement of personnel and urgent supplies: it is the sinews which bind together the widely spread structure of the Canadian defence system.

Of course Canada's defence commitments extend far beyond this country's borders — to Germany, Norway, Denmark, Cyprus, the Middle East and elsewhere. Dedicated to the support of NATO and international peacekeeping missions as well as the defence of North America and the protection of Canada's own sovereignty, this country's armed forces have a wider range of tasks than those of almost any allied country except the United States. Military air transport is vital to the performance of these duties, whether for supply shipments and troop rotations in peacetime, the dispatch of special forces in crisis periods, or the forward movement of reinforcements in wartime. Modern defence strategies and arrangements no longer tolerate tenuous supply lines and uncertain communications, with armies thrown up, half-forgotten on some foreign shore: they require continual, regular, methodical contacts and flows of messages, personnel and materiel, which can be provided only by a communications and supply system encompassing a strong air transport component.

The requirement for military air transport would become especially acute in periods of international crisis. The armed forces would have to wait for political authorization before starting war preparations, and might find themselves scrambling to carry out necessary movements in a few days rather than the several weeks normally used for planning purposes. Even if an international crisis unfolded relatively slowly, there would still be a premium on military air transport which could carry the most urgently needed troops and materiel into danger zones while assisting in the evacuation of Canadian dependents and civilians.

NATO strategists now believe that a land war in Europe could conceivably last several months, and that massive amounts of supplies might have to be shipped from North America to Europe during that time. If that is the case, then Canadian military transport squadrons could find themselves involved in extensive in-theatre operations in Europe as well as heavy transatlantic duties and continuing requirements in all parts of Canada.