

Canadians Observe Soviet Military Exercise



Soviet General-Major Lavrenyuk (centre) with Canadian observers Lt.Col. Jack Harris (left) and Mr. Denis Boulet (right).

Two Canadians were among 46 officials from 23 countries who observed a Soviet military exercise in the Kiev military district in March. They were there in accordance with the 1986 Stockholm Document on confidence- and security-building measures, which requires signatories to invite all other CSCE members to send observers to exercises involving a minimum of 17,000 troops. The observers are to confirm that the exercise is carried out in conformity with the exercise notification.

Although the observation threshold is 17,000, nothing prevents a country from inviting observers to any exercise taking place on its territory, regardless of the level of participation. This was the case with the Soviet exercise, which was forecast to involve 17,000 troops but actually involved 12,000.

The Canadians — Mr. Denis Boulet of the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of EAITC and Lieutenant-Colonel Jack Harris, Military Attaché with the Canadian Embassy in Moscow — were flown to Kiev on March 19 with the other observers. There General-Major Lavrenyuk, Deputy Commander of the Kiev Military District, briefed them on the purpose of the exercise, the

number of troops participating and the observation program.

The observers had an opportunity to watch a number of military operations including offensives and counter-offensives, the construction of a 100-metre bridge and its subsequent crossing by armoured vehicles and trucks, an airborne assault and simulated tank combat. They visited a field care unit, a field hospital and a defensive position. In addition, they viewed a demonstration of equipment, including armoured vehicles, artillery pieces and air defence equipment. There were numerous opportunities for dialogue between observers and hosts, as well as between observers and troops taking part in the exercise.

There was no doubt in the minds of participants that the observation contributed significantly to the development of confidence, which in turn encourages the growth of security. It was with the satisfaction of knowing that the objectives of the Stockholm Document had been met that the observers returned on March 23 to their respective countries. ■

CFE Update

Beginning mid-year, work on a CFE treaty was accelerated to meet the target of concluding an agreement by November to coincide with a planned CSCE Summit meeting in Paris. In addition to aiming for this deadline, negotiators had to respond to dramatic changes in European security, which altered the underlying assumptions on which the CFE negotiation was based. The agreement reached in Ottawa in February, for example, which placed limits on the level of US and Soviet forces stationed in Europe, became irrelevant as a result of the bilaterally-negotiated withdrawals of Soviet forces from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany.

Responding to a widely-held view that follow-on negotiations could further improve security in Europe, NATO

leaders proposed at their Summit meeting in July that further talks on conventional force reductions begin — with the same participants and mandate — following signature of the first CFE treaty. Participants began to refer to the current round of negotiations as CFE I, and to the follow-on round as CFE IA.

Eastern concerns about the size of the armed forces of a unified Germany were resolved with a binding German commitment to reduce the size of its combined armed forces to 370,000 personnel. Western participants stated their readiness to address the issue of the level of their armed forces in follow-on negotiations.

By late September, considerable progress had been achieved in the

negotiation, but serious difficulties remained for resolution. The problems included demands by the Soviet Union concerning levels of combat aircraft, and sufficiency (the percentage of total treaty-limited equipment that any one state may hold). A Soviet demand to retain 80 percent of all WTO entitlements was opposed not only by Western states, but by most East European states as well.

In addition, negotiators had to resolve how to calculate quotas for the verification inspections envisaged in the treaty, how to define the operational criteria for aerial inspection, and how to accommodate Soviet demands for the large-scale, irreversible conversion of military equipment to peaceful purposes, as opposed to its destruction. ■