

No Decision Yet On New Planes For NATO Units

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Ottawa, March 4—The future of Canada's air division of 12 squadrons serving with NATO forces in Europe is still undecided. This was made clear again today after another round of speculative stories about a Government decision to buy aircraft to re-equip the eight squadrons of Sabre jets included in the air division.

The other four squadrons are CF-100 aircraft which may be brought up to more modern standards with missile and even nuclear warhead weapons.

But Defense Production Minister O'Hurley flatly denied in the Commons reports that the Government had bought the Grumman Super-Tiger F11F-1F.

Outside the Commons, Defense Minister Pearkes made it clear that there had been no Government decision on what aircraft, if any, would be used to re-equip the air division.

If one is selected, there seems to be little doubt that it would

be produced at either the Canadair plant in Montreal or the Avro plant at Malton under license.

But the decision may not be made for several months. The RCAF, it is understood, has decided it would like to have the Grumman aircraft which has a dual attack and interceptor role with very short take-off capabilities.

However, Mr. Pearkes underlined in the Commons earlier this week that the Government and the services have been investigating a number of other aircraft. Among them are a fighter aircraft produced by the British Blackburn Co. and the Northrop N156F.

This latter aircraft is thought to be still very much in the running because it is much cheaper than the Super-Tiger, an advanced version not yet in production of the Grumman Tiger. And expense, as the Arrow decision underlined, is a prime factor in Government defense choices.

Mr. Pearkes revealed Monday that the plants where all three aircraft are being developed have been visited by RCAF and Government teams.

He emphasized today that discussions have to be held with NATO chiefs on the roles for which the air division might be best suited. When agreement has been reached on the role and the requirement, Mr. Pearkes said, "decision will be made as to the type of new plane, if any, with which to equip the division."

He stressed the words "if any" making it clear that the decision had not been made yet to re-equip the division with another aircraft.

The ideal solution, from the Government point of view, would be to have Canadair come up with another major contract, either for its CL-44 aircraft for radar picket duty or for Bomarc missile airframes, leaving the manufacture under license of the air division's new aircraft as the solution to the Avro problem.

Canadair has a large number of engineers at the Boeing plant on the west coast studying the Bomarc operation there which may indicate hope for a major Bomarc contract if the radar picket job, as expected, goes to Boeing.