

The Department of National Defense is faced with its greatest challenge of the post-war era—the establishment of a ready force which can spring into action in the first few days of war.

This is the decision which was taken at the recent meeting of the council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Paris.

To meet this challenge will require bold thinking and planning centred on air power. It gives the Department its greatest opportunity to really streamline the Air Force, Navy and Army.

If the Air Force's major task is ready defense let the number of CF-100 squadrons in Canada be expanded to fill the gaps in North America's Continental Air Defense shield and the auxiliary squadrons fashioned as best possible to fill this role.

Mitchells and Mustangs are fine aircraft but do they or even Vampires fill the prime role mission of the RCAF? If the flying auxiliary cannot be brought up to the "ready" status of the U. S. Air National Guard (and is there any reason it can not?) then what is its purpose?

There is little room for sentimentality about past records, achievements or squadron spirit when faced with the possibility of a nuclear bombing attack which can only be blunted by the finest technical weapons guided by men fully trained and ready to use them. It is the price of an effective deterrent to war.

If the Navy's and part of the Air Force's role is the

spotting and killing of submarines capable of atomic attack, then only the best is good enough. The preparations in this direction are effectively under way. But is there an effective defense now? Is it large enough?

Except for helicopters the Canadian Navy's naval aviation branch is still equipped with modified World War II equipment. Will this equipment stand the test today? Has naval aviation been given sufficient authority and support by National Defense?

In the light of today's threat the Army's role is more obscure. Surely if part of this role is offense the Army must be equipped with air power to give the greatest mobility to small numbers of weapons and men. There are no roads for trucks in Canada's northland and overseas roads choked with supplies do not fit into a picture of lightening war.

For defense there must be established batteries of ground-to-air weapons guarding strategic areas. The need surely is now. Stockpiles of World War II anti-aircraft weapons bear a poor resemblance to Nike anti-aircraft missiles ready for firing.

This is the task of Canada's defense planners—to streamline, to cut off the outdated defense organizations and build an effective combination of men and weapons. As never before Canada's whole defense planning must measure up to the requirements of effectiveness if the red alert was sounded in Europe and North America right now.

Plea for communications

If attack came now from the direction of certain areas of northern Canada it may be too late to do anything about it because of the lack of warning. There is desperate need for better communications in a north-south direction.

Strategic Air Command officials pinpoint this with a polite recognition of a friendly neighbor over whose affairs they have no say. But they are deeply concerned over the lack of ample communications linking the radar chains and advanced posts and bases with SAC and Air Defense Command operations centres.

Because SAC is as much Canada's deterrent force to war as that of the U. S. taxpayers who support it, the Canadian Government should do its utmost to ensure SAC's effectiveness.

Along the same lines, Canada's major air carriers now handling defense air freight in a north south direction continuously plead for better communications and radio aids to navigation.

The cost of building radio and ground communications networks over an area the size of Canada is far in excess of the economic need in terms of population. The same was also true of the trans-continental CPR line.

The economic development of the north is as dependent on ground and air communications and radio aids as was the West on the CPR line.

Scandinavian Airlines System wants communications available at Resolute Bay. Canadian Pacific Airlines is known to want facilities at Frobisher. Commercial air carriers working in the north need better facilities to ensure greater safety and reliability.

The need is urgent. Let it be given a top priority by both the departments of transport and national defense.