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Substitution of CF-100 aircraft for F-86 aircraft in R.C.A.F.
Air Division, Europe

37. The Minister of National Defence said that, during the last two years, S.H.A.P.E. had made several strong requests for Canada to provide all-weather fighter aircraft (CF-100's) to bolster the air strength of Western Europe. It had been pointed out that this could not be done because of various urgent domestic requirements. The request had since been modified and taken the form of a proposal to substitute four squadrons of CF-100's for four squadrons of F-86's in the R.C.A.F. Air Division in Europe. Recently, S.H.A.P.E. had been informed that domestic requirements had been met to a point where this recommendation could be given serious consideration.

For the next three years the major threat facing SACEUR would come from Soviet bombers of the TU-4 and IL-28 type capable of operating by day and by night, and able to carry atomic bombs. The air defence forces in Europe consisted almost entirely of day interceptors, and the lack of all-weather aircraft which could operate effectively at night gave Russia a tremendous advantage. The CF-100 would be capable of matching this threat and a contribution of four squadrons, or 72 aircraft, would not only materially strengthen the air defences of Western Europe but its psychological effect would be a deterrent out of all proportion to the numbers and the cost involved.

Having both CF-100's and F-86's at home and abroad would give the R.C.A.F. the broadest possible experience and would eliminate much duplication in training for those transferred between Canadian and European squadrons. The question of which of these two aircraft could be most effectively employed in the reserve squadrons was now being studied carefully. Because of the limited time available for training, reserve squadrons would not reach operational standards of readiness until 1958, and the transfer progressively of four squadrons of CF-100 to Europe, commencing in 1956, could thus be achieved without any significant effect on the reserve situation. The exchange would be at some expense to the all-weather capability at home, but this would be counter-balanced, in part, by the added height which could be achieved by the F-86 and by new developments in the electronic field which it appeared would improve this aircraft considerably.

The substitution, if accepted, would be made only on the understanding that the CF-100's would be located on existing Air Division bases, and that the new squadrons would remain part of the Air Division and come under the control of its Air Officer Commanding. It would also be specified that the Air Division could revert to 12 Interceptor Day Fighter Squadrons later on if Canada thought this to be in the general interest. It would involve an

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increase of 244 personnel in the Air Division, and additional construction and equipment costs of \$10.6 million, mostly additional aircraft in the "pipeline." The Chiefs of Staff felt this was a logical and desirable step to take.

The Minister concurred in these views and recommended approval of the transfer.

An explanatory memorandum had been circulated.

(Minister's memorandum, Dec. 7, 1954-Cab. Doc. 269-54).

38. In the course of discussion it was pointed out,-

(a) that an additional \$1.5 million would be required for operational expenses as well as the \$10.6 million for capital costs. However, of the latter amount over half was for "pipeline" aircraft and could be considered as an asset. On the other hand, the figure of \$1.5 million seemed a conservative estimate, particularly as 244 personnel were to be added to the strength of the Division. All the costs involved would be met within the regular Defence Appropriations.

(b) The U.S. were providing a few aircraft capable of fighting at night but they were not as efficient as the CF-100's and the British only had obsolete types available for the purpose. It seemed clear that a Canadian contribution of this character would meet a real need and would be of great psychological value. The main objective of the defence effort was to act as a deterrent against aggression, and the knowledge on the part of the Communists that CF-100's were in Europe would be of great deterrent value.

39. The Cabinet approved the recommendation of the Minister of National Defence and agreed that four squadrons of all weather fighter aircraft (CF-100's) be substituted for four squadrons of interceptor day fighter aircraft (F-86's) in the R.C.A.F. Air Division in Europe, in accordance with the conditions submitted, and on the understanding that the added cost involved in the transfer would be met from regular Defence Appropriations.