

EN GARDE. A trio of USAF F-89D "Scorpions" boom over Alaskan peaks making a flying barrier on Canada's flank in the far northwest where Russian and U. S. territory are only jet-minutes apart.

By Richard LaCoste

Less than one hundred miles from Canada's far northwestern border, above the tundra-studded wastelands of Alaska, a glint of silver streaks through the early morning sun. But only a trained radar observer could detect it.

Miles high, the silver streak is shooting through a reconnaissance pattern at near sonic speed.

A few minutes before, it was hugging a strip of concrete at Ladd Air Force Base, Alaska. Now, after bellying off into the overcast like a fire-spewing missile, it is hurtling north toward Siberia over the rugged Brooks Range and the frozen Arctic wastelands on a mission vital to Canada.

To the southeast, at Canadian defense bases, RCAF pilots are on the alert as they stand by ready to climb into their Avro CF-100 twin-jet all-weather interceptors. They, too, perform a reciprocal protective mission.

For just as Alaska-based U. S. airmen are on the alert to intercept enemy aircraft on Canada's northwestern flank, so do Canadian airmen seek to protect the U. S. against a

Pole vaulting surprise attack from the north.

► **Buffer Force.** But let's concern ourselves here with the Alaskan buffer between Canada and potential attack from Russia or Soviet territory. Acting as the buffer are interceptor and fighter bomber squadrons stationed at Ladd, Eielson and Elmendorf USAF bases.

How are these squadrons guarding Canada against attack through the Polar Basin?

Lieutenant General Joseph H. Atkinson, commander-in-chief of the Alaskan command, recently revealed that, literally speaking, "we (that is, the U. S.) are only five miles from Russia." (Big Diomedes in the Bering Straits is owned by the Russians; Little Diomedes belongs to the U. S.)

► **The Threat**—Both General Atkinson and Canadian military officials also are well aware that the Chutotsky Peninsula in Siberia—some 50 miles from St. Lawrence Island, U. S. sovereign territory—is loaded with swept-wing MIG-15s and the faster all-weather version of the MIG-17.

They are also aware of, and have much respect for the capabilities of the IL-28, a speedy, twin-jet, Russian

bomber, which can carry nuclear, and the thermo-nuclear bombs at speeds of more than 500 mph at 40,000 feet.

General Atkinson observed recently that the Russians could even by-pass Alaska to attack Canada and the U. S.

"Since we don't have the DEW (Distant Early Warning) line in yet," Atkinson said, "they could fly down through Canada until such time as they were picked up by Canadian air-defense warning systems."

► **ALCANUS**—To warn and protect each other against surprise attack, the U. S. and Canada have a joint plan for defense. The plan is known as ALCANUS: Alaska-Canada-U. S.

Under the plan, U. S. and Canadian airmen jointly conduct what are known as CPX exercises: Command-post Exercise.

But let's return to the silver streaks threading contrails through the early morning Alaska sun.

Three Scorpion squadrons call Ladd home. The 433rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron is commanded by Maj. John L. Moutier, Jr. The 18th is headed by Maj. John H. (Buck) Rogers. And the 449th is led by Maj. Lawrence DeZonia.

Northern defends

Alaska-based USAF
a few miles from Soviet

buffer Canada

Scorpions fly a tightrope
fighter-bomber bases

All are equipped with the new F-89D Northrop interceptors.

Constantly on the alert, the Scorpions sit silently in the open bays which dot a snow-white field.

Formidable and fast, the Scorpions are aptly named.

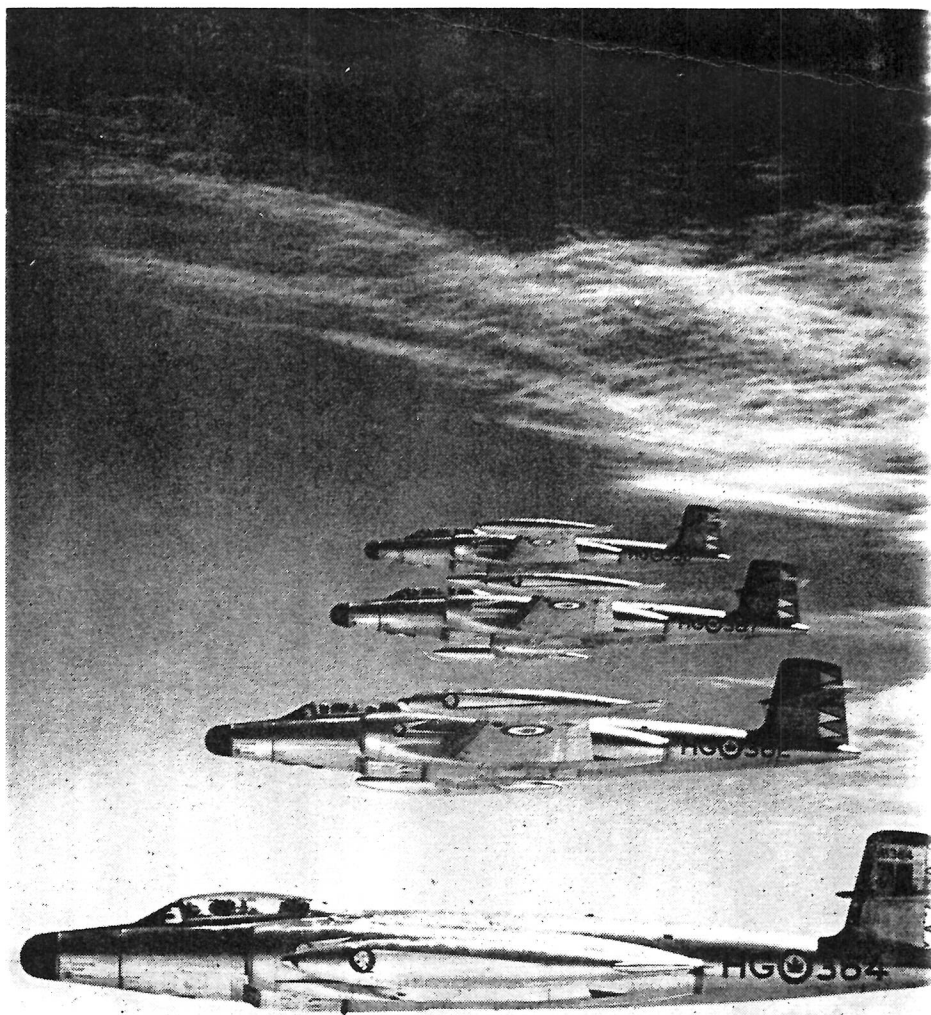
Fifty-two folding-fin rockets jut from each of the wingtip pods. Fuel tanks are filled. Auxiliary power units are hooked up for fast takeoff. Gear for both the pilot and radar observer is in place, ready.

Everything's set for a scramble—dry run or defense and destruction of an enemy.

Southeast of Ladd, at Eielson, the 455th Fighter-Bomber Squadron with its Sabre jets stands equally ready for dry run or the real thing. The base is big enough to hold B-52 intercontinental jet bombers capable of striking at the heart of the Russian empire with atomic or hydrogen bombs.

► **Too Close.** But so close are the Russians that the U. S. Air Force wouldn't think of staging its medium or big bombers at Eielson. The danger of losing them in a surprise attack is too great.

Hub of the whole Alaskan setup is the Combat Operations Centre. From



ROUGH HURDLE. An over-the-Pole air strike at North America would be met head-on by the RCAF's Air Defense Command equipped with CF-100s.

radio messages from radar sites and other communications media, control officers could plot the speed, altitude and strength of an invader in seconds.

From maps and charts on tables and walls, a knowing military man could tell at a glance, any time of the day or night, how many aircraft are on the alert, how many are on standby, and how many are scanning the skies on reconnaissance missions.

If an enemy should strike suddenly, all information would funnel into the centre.

► **Scramble.** Within seconds, the in-

formation would be relayed to Anchorage, Alaska. From there it would be speeded electronically to U. S. Air Defense Command headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Canada ADC headquarters at St. Hubert, Que., and then to important points in the U. S. and Canada.

Moments after warning, the Scorpions would be ready to taxi. In a minute or two, they would be streaking through the fog-shrouded Alaskan atmosphere as the jet pilots sought to destroy the enemy before he could cross the Canadian border.