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February 4th, 1960.

ITEM DISCUSSED

Para.

1. Improvements in air defence; replacement aircraft for CF-100 in Canada

THIS DOCUMENT ON LOAN FROM THE PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE-CANADA

SECRET

CABINET CONCLUSIONS

A meeting of the Cabinet was held in Room 340-S,  
in the House of Commons, on Thursday, February 4th, 1960,  
at 10:30 a.m.

Present:

The Prime Minister  
(Mr. Diefenbaker) in the Chair,  
The Secretary of State for External Affairs  
(Mr. Green),  
The Minister of Finance  
(Mr. Fleming),  
The Minister of Veterans Affairs  
(Mr. Brooks),  
The Minister of Transport  
(Mr. Hees),  
The Solicitor General  
(Mr. Balcer),  
The Minister of National Defence  
(Mr. Pearkes),  
The Minister of Trade and Commerce  
(Mr. Churchill),  
The Minister of Justice  
(Mr. Fulton),  
The Minister of Agriculture  
(Mr. Harkness),  
The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration  
(Mrs. Fairclough),  
The Minister of Fisheries  
(Mr. MacLean),  
The Minister of Labour  
(Mr. Starr),  
The Postmaster General  
(Mr. William Hamilton),  
The Minister without Portfolio  
(Mr. Browne),  
The Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys  
(Mr. Comtois),  
The Minister of National Health and Welfare  
(Mr. Monteith),  
The Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources  
(Mr. Alvin Hamilton),  
The Minister of Defence Production  
(Mr. O'Hurley),  
The Minister of Public Works  
(Mr. Walker),  
The Associate Minister of National Defence  
(Mr. Sevigny).

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The Secretary to the Cabinet  
(Mr. Bryce),  
The Assistant Secretaries to the Cabinet  
(Mr. Martin),  
(Dr. Hodgson).

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Improvements in air defence;  
replacement aircraft for CF-100 in Canada  
(Previous reference Jan. 27)

1. The Minister of National Defence said that, since the summer of 1958, the Chiefs of Staff had been working on a direction from the Cabinet Defence Committee to investigate and submit proposals for "any additional interceptor aircraft of a proven developed type that may be required in lieu of the CF-105".

The Soviet Air Force had in service today, a jet bomber force of over 1100 aircraft which would have a useful life for some years to come; they constituted a threat to North America in the early 1960's. The United Kingdom and the United States planned to use supersonic interceptors for a time. Analyses showed that the CF-100 Mk. V was no longer operationally satisfactory against the present Russian bomber threat and it was impracticable to modify it to carry a nuclear air-to-air missile. The Chiefs of Staff had confirmed the continued need for the operation of interceptor aircraft in Canadian airspace.

General Kuter, Commander in Chief of NORAD, had recommended an air defence plan which included the withdrawal of the present nine CF-100 squadrons, commencing in 1960, and their replacement, to be completed by 1962, by six squadrons equipped with supersonic aircraft capable of carrying air-to-air nuclear missiles. This plan was being studied by the Chiefs of Staff.

The Chief of the Air Staff had investigated possibilities and methods of obtaining a limited number of supersonic interceptors to replace the CF-100, commencing late in 1960. Amongst those considered was an all-weather version of the F104G but such an aircraft, even if it could be manufactured soon, which it could not, would not be compatible with the SAGE environment and therefore would be of little use in the defence system of North America. However, it was learned that the United States Air Force would consider making available to the R.C.A.F. sixty-six F101B all-weather aircraft by re-equipping U.S.A.F. squadrons in less critical areas with a shorter range aircraft. The F101B was the most suitable U.S. aircraft available to replace the CF-100. Delivery could start in July, 1960 and be completed in March, 1961. Having a greater operational capacity than the CF-100 and being capable of carrying a nuclear air-to-air missile, these aircraft could be deployed in five squadrons of 12 aircraft each, replacing the present nine squadrons of 18 aircraft, thus reducing the manpower and operating requirements. The total cost of 66 F101B's, including spares, ground support equipment, weapons, training equipment and construction, was estimated to be approximately \$180 million. A cost-sharing arrangement with the U.S. might be possible and payments might be spread over a period of years.

The U.S.A.F. were anxious to transfer as many of their defence commitments in Canada as possible, as soon as Canada was prepared to take them over. The R.C.A.F. might assume certain of the U.S. responsibilities for radars in the Pinetree system, in exchange for which the U.S. might provide the 66 interceptors.

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In general, the conclusions were that the CF-100 was no longer operationally satisfactory to deal with the present bomber threat, that for some time any attack on North America would probably include manned bombers as well as ICBM's, that it would be prudent to provide interceptor and BOMARC weapons to assist in the defence of the deterrent for the next three to five years and that, in addition to this role, a limited number of supersonic fighters were needed for identification purposes and to exercise the warning and interceptor system.

The Chiefs of Staff had concluded that, if satisfactory arrangements could be made, a small number of aircraft should be procured from the U.S. On their advice, the Minister recommended that negotiations be entered into with the U.S. Defense Department to procure 66 F101B's, either through a cost-sharing arrangement or by Canada assuming the responsibility for the manning and maintenance of certain U.S.A.F. installations in Canada; the results of these negotiations to be reported to Cabinet in due course for consideration.

An explanatory memorandum had been circulated, (Minister's memorandum, Feb. 1, - Cab. Doc. 34/60).

2. Mr. Pearkes added that it was the belief of the Chiefs of Staff that a bomber threat would exist until 1965. C-in-C NORAD's estimate was until 1970. Mr. Pearkes agreed with the Canadian Chiefs' view. A decision had to be reached soon on his recommendation because comments on NORAD's latest defence plan could not be long delayed. The CF-100 was really out of date now.

3. The Prime Minister said that the first question raised by the proposal was whether, having regard to the decision to cancel the CF-105 and the traditional Canadian position against accepting mutual aid, the government could agree to an arrangement under which the United States would pay a share of the cost of equipment to be used by Canadian forces.

4. During the discussion the following points were made:

(a) A cost-sharing arrangement for these aircraft, despite its advantages, was politically intolerable in all the circumstances.

(b) On the other hand, a decision to acquire F101B's from the U.S. without payment or on a shared basis could be defended on the ground that they would be used to defend the deterrent. However, to try to justify such a decision in terms of these aircraft being acquired as a replacement for the Arrow would be impossible.

(c) A reasonable case for purchase could be made on the basis that the aircraft would help to strengthen North American defence for a time, at much less cost than the Arrow.

(d) The F101B should have been considered as an alternative to the Arrow long before the decision to cancel the latter aeroplane was taken. To this it was said that the version of the F101B now being discussed was a different machine to the F101B of two or three years ago.

(e) Apart from the difficulties of acquiring these in the face of the Arrow decision, the R.C.A.F., with only 66 aircraft, would have very little effectiveness against a Soviet bomber attack. Regardless of the nature and extent of the defences, many bombers would get through. Instead of obtaining any more interceptors the other elements of the R.C.A.F. should be strengthened.

(f) Canadians did not worry too much about U.S. expenditures in Canada for the defence of North America. If the U.S. wanted to provide more interceptor defence, let them do it. But if the government obtained U.S. aircraft now for the R.C.A.F. it would be laughed out of court.

(g) If it were accepted that there was no need for defence against the manned bomber, then the BOMARC programmes should be cancelled and the radars dismantled.

(h) After a good deal of thought and with some trepidation, the United Kingdom had formally announced that there was no defence against the present threat. The public response had been wonderment that it had taken the government so long to find out.

(i) The dilemma was simply this. If no more interceptors were supplied, the U.S. might well take over this form of defence in Canada with all that such a course implied for national sovereignty. On the other hand, to acquire the F101B's, as had been proposed, would be most embarrassing in the light of all the statements made in connection with the Arrow.

(j) A final decision was not necessary immediately. All that was required was authority to discuss the proposition outlined by the Minister with the U.S. NORAD's recommendation was only the recommendation of a field commander and what the U.S. government felt about it was not yet known. Agreement to discuss, however, implied a willingness to have the CF-100's in Canada replaced with F101B's. If the decision were not to re-equip, then the CF-100 squadrons should be disbanded quite soon.

(k) Adding more BOMARC's to the air defence system would be easier to justify than buying interceptors.

(l) Whatever the decision was to be, it had to be taken in the interest of the nation's security, no matter how painful that might be, and not for other reasons.

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(m) It was doubtful if a decision not to replace the CF-100 squadrons would make a nullity of NORAD.

5. The Prime Minister added that he did not see how he could swallow what he had said following the cancellation of the Arrow. He and the Minister were responsible. If other aircraft should now be acquired to protect the national security, perhaps it would be possible to do it if some changes in personnel were made.

6. The Cabinet postponed decision on the proposals of the Minister of National Defence for discussions with the U.S. government to ascertain on what terms it might be possible to arrange the replacement of the R.C.A.F.'s CF-100's in Canada.

R.B. Bryce,  
Secretary to the Cabinet.