

Homeland Defenders

IN ALL WEATHER, CF-100'S STAND GUARD AGAINST HOSTILE INTRUDERS

THERE ARE no longer any if's, but's, or maybe's. The RCAF has at last attained its planned 41-squadron establishment. But if the fanfare in honor of what should have been considered a signal achievement seems a little weak, it is because a major weapon of the defence arsenal, the auxiliary force, has been found to have a dull edge and so far nobody has figured out a way to sharpen it up.

When the 41-squadron force was being planned a few years ago, it was decided that 31 squadrons would be fighter units broken down in this way: 12 regular day fighter squadrons for service in Europe as 1 Air Division, nine regular all-weather squadrons for home defence; ten auxiliary all-weather squadrons, also for home defence.

Two Down: The first objective was achieved with what appeared to be ridiculous ease; it is now more than two years since the last of the four wings arrived overseas and the Divi-

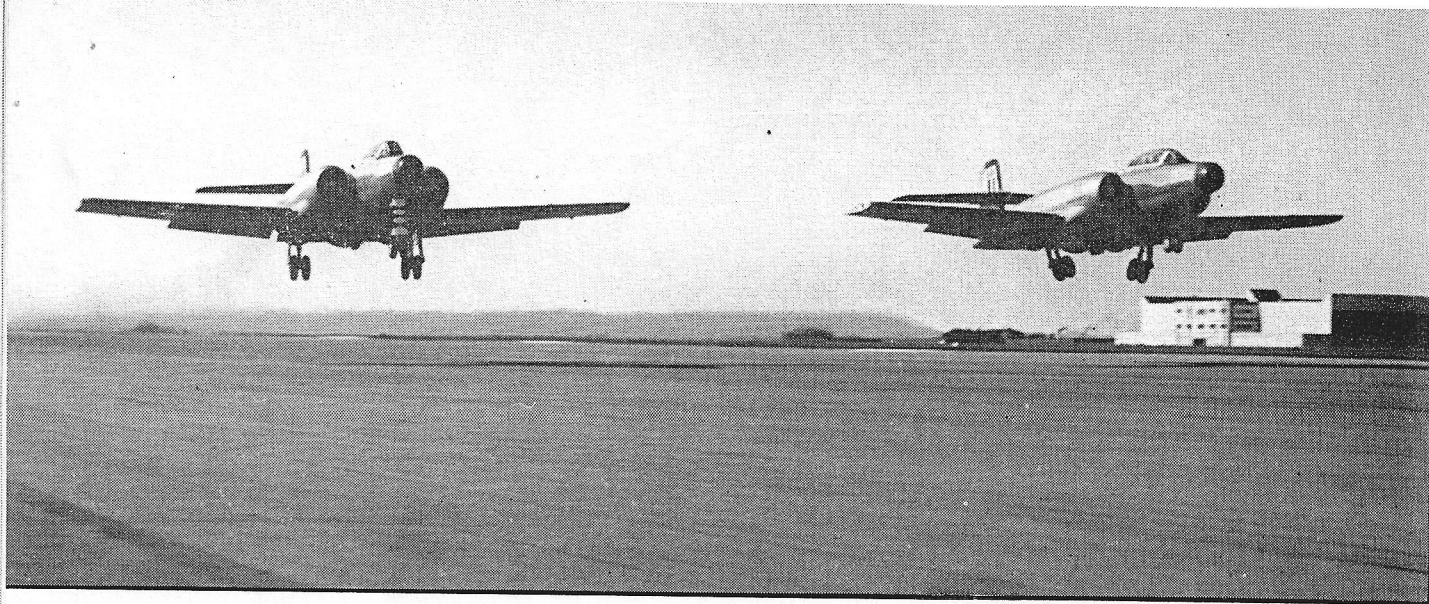
sional has been operational as a unit for nearly as great a length of time. The second objective, the nine regular all-weather home defence fighter squadrons, was not quite so easily attained, but eventually all the snags of training and equipping were eliminated and this year it became possible for defence officials to speak without hesitation of the existence of nine fully operational CF-100 squadrons.

The third objective, as originally visualized, will never be realized. The plan to convert the ten auxiliary squadrons to an all-weather role by equipping them with modern aircraft looked good on paper, but the splitting headaches that the Air Force encountered in bringing the regular all-weather squadrons to operational status made it only too evident that it just wasn't feasible to do the same thing with the auxiliary squadrons. After a searching study of the pros and cons of the case, the Air Force was forced to the painful

conclusion that the CF-100 was just too much airplane for part-time fliers, either to fly or to maintain.

Regret to Announce: And so, during June, Defence Minister Ralph Campney announced in Commons that: "It was our intention until recently to equip our auxiliary squadrons with CF-100's, but I should now like to advise the house that, based on experience, the feasibility of doing this is being reassessed. Both in our own air force and in the air force of Great Britain it has been found that complex modern interceptors of the latest types are not wholly suitable for auxiliary squadron service.

"There is no reflection in this on the personnel of auxiliary squadrons, who have proven themselves to be both keen and capable. But it has become, in the light of experience, increasingly doubtful whether it is practicable and fair to expect that men who have full-time regular civilian employment can



also put in the requisite number of hours of flying to become and remain adept at handling these fast and heavy jets and their highly complicated equipment on a fully operational basis.

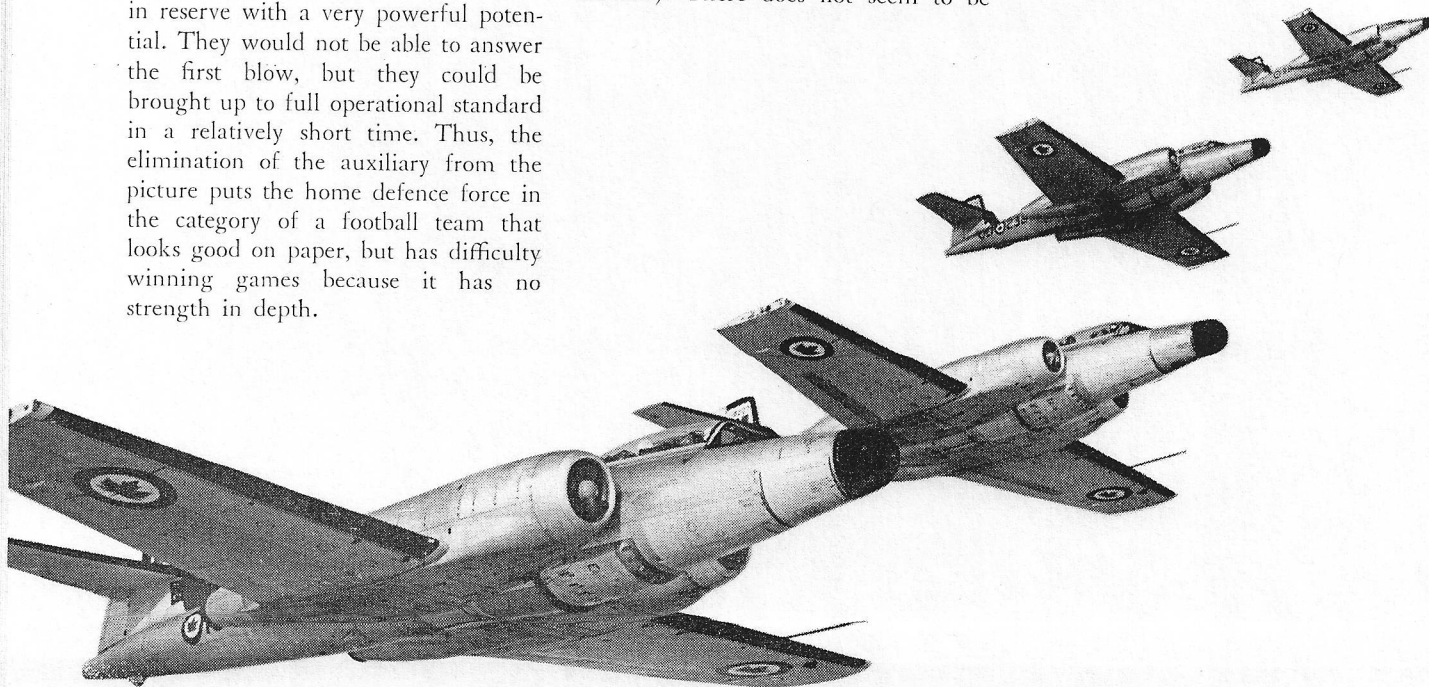
"We are, consequently, giving intensive study to the future role of auxiliary flying units and the effect which any change in their formation would have on our home defence situation and what steps will necessarily have to be taken to meet that situation."

Drastic Effect: The truth of the matter is that the removal of the auxiliary from the home defence force will have a very drastic effect indeed. While ten auxiliary all-weather squadrons can by no stretch of the imagination be considered the equivalent of ten regular units, nevertheless they form a force in reserve with a very powerful potential. They would not be able to answer the first blow, but they could be brought up to full operational standard in a relatively short time. Thus, the elimination of the auxiliary from the picture puts the home defence force in the category of a football team that looks good on paper, but has difficulty winning games because it has no strength in depth.

The next year will see some sweeping changes in the fighter squadron establishment, and in the roles of many of the individual squadrons. First, a way will have to be devised to allow the auxiliary squadrons to play an effective part in the defence of North America, even if this part is somewhat more restricted than originally pictured. Second, additional regular CF-100 squadrons will have to be formed for service with the home defence force. In any event, four home defence all-weather squadrons are scheduled to join the Air Division in 1956, thereby reducing the RCAF all-weather squadrons based in Canada from nine to five (there are also a number of USAF all-weather units flying Northrop F-89 Scorpions, operating from U.S. bases in Canada). There does not seem to be

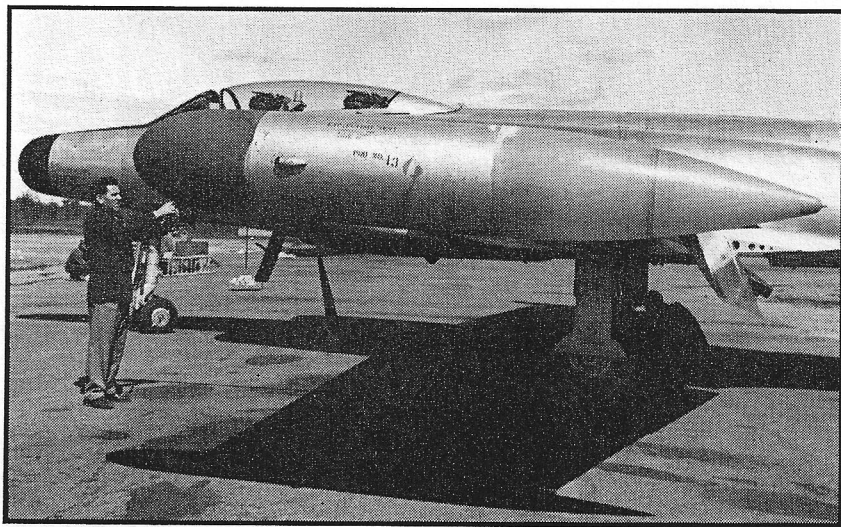
any alternative to the formation of at least four new CF-100 squadrons to fill the gap left by those which are moving to Europe. It seems likely, too, that several additional regular CF-100 squadrons will be formed for more service, to make up for the loss of the auxiliary's support.

Sabre Speculation: One possibility is that the ten auxiliary fighter and fighter-bomber squadrons will re-equip with F-86 Sabres. So far, this possibility is based on pure speculation. It may even be that the idea was originated in the auxiliary itself, for it is known to meet with considerable enthusiasm among active reserve officers. There are

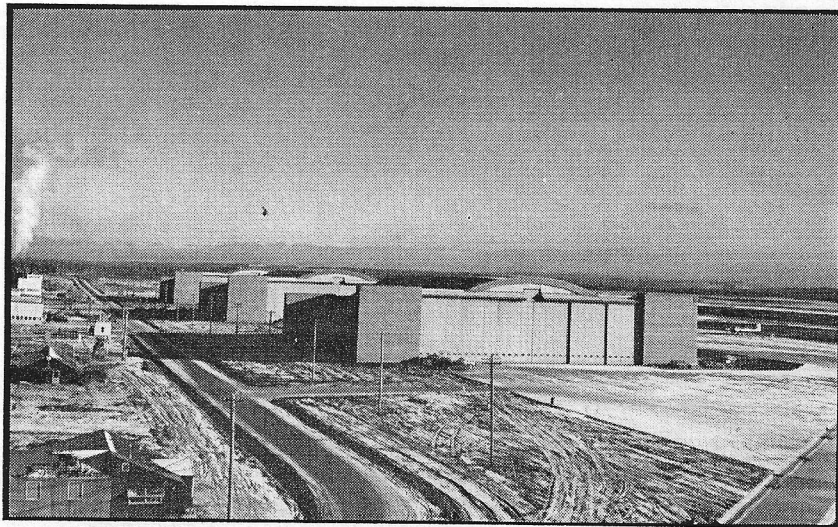




Three aircrews of 428 Ghost Squadron are shown running towards their CF-100/4 all-weather fighters after receiving an alert. This squadron is based at RCAF Station Uplands, near Ottawa, and is one of nine in Canada.



Inside this innocuous looking pod, which has a mate on the opposite wingtip, is a cluster of destruction in the form of about 30 2.75 in. unguided rocket missiles. Nose and tail of pod blow off when rockets are fired.



The chilly scene above shows the new air base at Cold Lake, Alberta, where the RCAF has established a big new weapons firing range. Cold Lake became the home of No. 3 All-Weather Operational Training Unit last spring.

a number of factors which lend support to this move as a logical one: (1) the RCAF has more Sabres than it knows what to do with; (2) Sabres are in service with USAF Reserve and Air National Guard squadrons, with no indications that they are found to be too complex for either pilots or ground crews; (3) there is no apparent alternative way of retaining the auxiliary squadrons as an effective part of the air defence system, certainly none that offers the same advantages of convenience and economy.

and then there were nine

DURING THE past year, the organization charged with the air defence of Canada, Air Defence Command, has seen the fruition of many longstanding projects. The most important of these was, of course, the formation of the last of the nine regular all-weather CF-100 squadrons called for by the air defence blueprint.

Actually, all of these squadrons had been formed by early this year, but it is only recently that their equipment rosters have been completed, and that crew training has progressed sufficiently to be able to describe the squadrons as operational. The nine squadrons are scattered across Canada.

Air Defence Command, which has headquarters at St. Hubert, P.Q., is now commanded by Air Vice Marshal Larry Wray, AOC, who works closely with his USAF opposite number. For all practical purposes, the RCAF's ADC and the USAF's ADC work as one. A hostile blip on a radar scope anywhere on the North American continent results in a simultaneous warning flash at the Canadian Command headquarters at St. Hubert, and its American counterpart at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Looking to the future, it is possible to foresee not only an expansion of the Canadian air defence force, but also a gradual improvement of its weapons. The CF-105 is on its all-powerful way, of course, but of more immediate interest are the improved versions of the CF-100 that are coming along. Now under development is the Mk. 4C, which boasts an operational ceiling of around 55,000 feet and a greatly increased rate of climb to altitude. After that, who knows? The CF-100 has all the characteristics of being an extremely adaptable and versatile aircraft. It will be around for a long time yet.