

Integration Not New For Army and Navy; RCAF Case Different

By HAROLD GREER

The integration of Canadian and U.S. air defenses now under way hit the Canadian army and navy several years ago.

Canada's brigade group in NATO has from the beginning been integrated with the British contribution for operational purposes. It is supplied through the British logistics pipeline. It depends for long-range artillery support on British guns and U.S. missiles. In the last analysis, it is helpless without U.S. tactical and strategic nuclear power behind it.

Yet the disposition, use and fate of that brigade on a battlefield depends on decisions made not by the Canadian Government, not by NATO Council, but by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe—a U.S. officer responsible only to the president of the United States.

Similarly, the operational command of most of the Canadian navy on the east coast will pass in the event of an emergency to the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, a U.S. admiral responsible not to NATO but to the president.

Why then, with these precedents, should Canadian politicians and the public be apprehensive about integrating Canada's air defenses with those of the United States under a U.S. air force general, especially when it is agreed (for the first time) that he shall be responsible to the Canadian as well as to the U.S. government? There appear to be several reasons.

Although it is accepted that Canada has neither the manpower nor the material resources to defend herself, the RCAF has been relatively much more independent and self-supporting than the army or the navy.

An army brigade group of 5,500 men obviously must be welded into a much larger force if it is to be any use against 175 Soviet divisions.

One aircraft carrier, a dozen modern destroyers and two reconnaissance squadrons are plainly meaningless against 250 long-range Soviet submarines unless they are part of a bigger system.

But the RCAF has been a rather different proposition. Its air division in Europe—275 aircraft, 6,000 men—is not only acknowledged to be the best and most effective air interceptor force in NATO, it is the mainstay of NATO's air defenses.

With the exception of fuel, ammunition and rations, it is supplied and maintained from Canada, via a leased base in Britain. It operates its own microwave communications and its own radar warning system.

Similarly, the RCAF air defense command in Canada has been able, up to now, to provide what defense planners call a reasonable degree of security without relying significantly on external help.

Contrary to a widely held view, the Soviet Union does not have the capacity to make an over-the-pole attack with thousands of bombers over the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin. Most authoritative estimates place the Russian long-range bomber strength at about 500 aircraft (the question of intercontinental missiles and submarine-based attack will be discussed in a subsequent article).

Should Moscow ever put these planes to use, it is axiomatic that they will have to be deployed against targets around the world—not only against Strategic Air Command bases in the United States, but also against the 100-odd retaliatory sites and refueling bases elsewhere.

One competent air power expert told this reporter that if the Russians were currently able to launch an initial wave (which is what counts) of 50 bombers against the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence northern approaches, they would do well.

Even if this estimate be doubled, it would still be within the capacity of the 150-odd CF-100's which the RCAF has now to defend the area. While no absolute prediction of kills is possible, simulated tests by NORAD have shown that a kill ratio of about 95 per cent is obtainable even under the most adverse conditions.

But the current strength of the RCAF is clearly inadequate for the future. Despite their successes with intercontinental missiles, the Soviet Union, according to intelligence estimates, is continuing to build long-range bombers.

It must be assumed that Russia, like the United States, will soon have in inventory large numbers of supersonic, high-altitude aircraft, against which the CF-100 will be impotent. If it is to stay in business, the RCAF will soon need not only a better interceptor, but more of them.

It is at this point that the fantastic cost of building, basing and flying modern interceptors arises. From everything that can be learned in Ottawa, the Government has definitely made up its mind that Canada can no longer stand the pace, and the only answer is integration—in short, to call for U.S. help.

Whether this will destroy the identity of the RCAF, as many senior officers fear, will depend on the extent to which U.S. interceptor squadrons are introduced into Canada. That the number will be substantial has already been accepted by the cabinet.

There can be little doubt, however, that integration will bring a crushing blow to the Canadian aircraft industry with its 42,000 workers. The United States has refused to buy the Avro Arrow, has cancelled production of its own equivalent, the F-106D, and is expediting development of the F-108, a chemically-fueled aircraft which

the trade has not expected until 1965.

Ottawa is already discussing possible production of the F-108 in Canada with the United States bearing most of the cost. If, as the federal government currently may intend, the Arrow is not ordered into production, and the U.S. aircraft industry insists on all of the F-108 business, there will be no more interceptors built in Canada and the mainstay of the Canadian industry for the past 10 years will disappear.

Integration, finally, means Canadian acceptance of a U.S. view of the cold war and the world struggle which Canada, up to now, has managed to avoid in all its implications.

It is this aspect which really bothers the politicians.

Although the army has been integrated in Europe, the maintenance of a brigade abroad has meant keeping twice as many troops in the pipeline at home, and these forces have been available, and have been used, for non-NATO purposes, particularly in Korea and the Middle East. Similarly, the navy only comes under the operation command of SAC-LANT in the event of war or an emergency and its units have, been employed in less-than-total-war situations.

But air defense integration, many informed persons in Ottawa fear, will tend to diminish this flexibility and perhaps remove it altogether. They point out that continental air defense started out as a warning system for alerting U.S. nuclear retaliatory power and is now developing into a gigantic effort to protect the deterrent.

Canada contributed substantially to the warning system, and is now entering the second phase, but the decision to use the deterrent remains, as it must, with the United States.

Once this process is completed and Canadian air defense is absorbed into the U.S. system, they ask, what influence can Canada hope to have on vital U.S. decisions?

External Affairs Minister Smith must have pondered this one in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris last Dec. 18. The NATO council was about to adjourn with a communique which read, in part:

"The council reaffirmed that NATO defensive strategy continues to be based on the existence of effective shield forces and on the manifest will to use nuclear retaliatory forces."

Mr. Smith argued some hint of conciliation should be incorporated. He held the meeting up three hours, warning he would not agree to the wording as it stood. Finally the words, "to repel aggression," were added to the paragraph.

Once the United States, for all practical purposes, has taken over Canada's air defenses, will Mr. Smith be granted even three little words?

Third of a Series