



AVRO ARROW

Deterioration

- Shaky Start
- Triumph
- **Deterioration**
- Black Friday

Deteriorating situation

June 24, 1999



The Arrow had an outstanding record, but it suffered two minor runway crashes.

The October 4th, 1957, coincidence of the launch of the Sputnik on the same day as the Arrow's unveiling was one of history's ironic touches. It symbolized perfectly the air defence paradigm of the day. Suddenly the "bomber gap" became the "missile gap". Many believed that the quarry which the Arrow had been designed to hunt down, the high-flying supersonic or trans-sonic bomber, was being replaced by

intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), which were impervious to manned fighters.

The idea began to circulate that manned aircraft were on their way out. This may seem absurd today, but the technological uncertainty that gives rise to wild speculation can be appreciated by anyone watching trends in technology markets today. In 1957, the missile looked like it was the future not only for nuclear attack, but also as an air defence system. In England, for example, the horizon looked dim for the aviation industry when British Minister of Defence Duncan Sandys cancelled all aircraft projects but one.



Here we see the landing gear malfunctioning on the second accident.



Six days after the flight of the first Arrow, on March 31st 1958, the Conservatives won the largest electoral victory in Canadian history, securing 208 seats out of 265. There



seemed to have been a deep desire to terminate the Arrow in the Diefenbaker government, but the boom of the fifties had subsided, and as it stood, it was politically

dangerous to threaten jobs in the employment-poor Toronto area. Diefenbaker had been in no position to rock the Arrow boat as long as the Conservatives held only a minority government. Now deep mutual distrust began to take hold at Avro and among the Conservatives. The Conservatives accused Avro of greediness and intense lobbying, while Avro claimed it was only trying to ascertain what the lay of the land was. Behind the scenes discussions were underway that would have caused a lot of anxiety at Avro, but nothing was leaked out.

By 1958, the Department of Defence Production estimated that \$300 million had been spent on the Arrow, and that a further \$871 million would need to be spent. The number of planes to be produced was dropped to 169 from 300, at a cost of \$12 million per unit. These figures can be interpreted in different ways: Defence Minister George Pearkes, himself perhaps the Arrow's greatest adversary, stated in an 1958 address to the U.S. Secretary of State about the burdensome costs of Canadian air defence, placed the total at only \$780 million.



In the military, tensions were on the rise as the Arrow program started to eat up large percentages of the defence budget. Rivalry inside the airforce grew as well. The Arrow couldn't be adapted to European theatre needs, and a rift developed between Canadian NATO and NORAD air force officers.

In August 1958 the CSC advised the government to cancel the Arrow and buy two U.S. Bomarc installations and institute its complementary SAGE control system, as well as purchase 100 U.S. built interceptors at \$2 million each.



The ready-to-go Iroquois

The decision to cancel *engine being placed into the engine cavity of the Arrow* was without doubt a *206. It would never fly.* difficult one for the Diefenbaker cabinet, and there was much discussion over the impact it would have on Canadian morale. But on Feb 20th, 1959, -- Black Friday -- Diefenbaker simultaneously announced to the House of Commons and to Avro itself that the Arrow and Iroquois programs were immediately cancelled. It was a fait accompli.

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