8 COMMENT The Calgary Sunday Sun, July 15, 2001

anicky feds call in the Yani

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Americans enlisted to solve 21-year, billion-dollar chopper boondoggle

which model to buy. magine if the average Canadian setting out to buy a new \$20,000 car spent 21 years and an additional \$10,000 in expenses, trying to decide

other wasted expense, trying in vain to decide billion of taxpayers' money on administration and well on its way to spending 21 years and almost \$1 The federal government, on the other hand, is

which model of naval nelicopiers to buy for an additional budget of about \$2 bil

Yanks. Solution? Call in the

contracting procedures on this one don't ask about normal government at the Pentagon about \$100,000 quietly slipped their U.S. counterparts week, the brass at National to help sort out the great Canadian Defence headquarters in Ottawa Sometime in the past

Greg

chopper boondoggle.

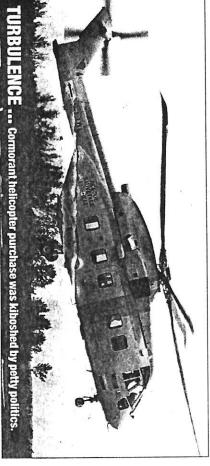
neering consulting agency funded by the U.S. military. Mitre Corporation, a respected engithe money is being paid to the

ence, much less a line of expertise. its website gives no hint that choppers are an area of experi-It is not clear what the agency knows about helicopters —

and ferocious lobbying. pool of bureaucratic infighting, political gerrymandering, being hired to hunt for the truth in what has become a cess No matter, the American consultants are supposedly

scandalous waste of taxpayers' money The Canadian helicopter program is also becoming a

will add up to more than \$1 billion, including a \$400-million crats and consultants working on this purchase since 1980 Insiders tell us when all the bills are in, the cost of bureau-



consultants missed. "contingency fund" to cover everything the bureaucrats and

stunning even for Jean Chretien's government. saga of mismanagement and political meddling on a scale only the latest chapter — and expense — in a remarkable Calling in reinforcements from the American military is

copter deal are now accusing the Canadian government of uncommon, get this: All three main contenders for the heli rigging the bidding process against them. While complaints about government contracting are not

group's bid to sell the military its Cormorant helicopter. interference from Chretien's office is intended to thwart the The leading contender, EH Industries, claims political

claim it is the military that has rigged the required helicopter specifications to exclude them from the competition in favour of the Cormorant. The other two bidders, Eurocopter and Sikorsky Aircraft

company's chopper was being cut out of the running Last year, U.S.-based Sikorsky began complaining the

ly the fault of the Canadian military. run in the bidding is certainly a major impediment, but hard The fact that Sikorsky doesn't have a finished product to

> sortium, has quietly threatened to pull out of the bidding altogether unless the military changes the required specifications Now Eurocopter, a French-German con

of great over-simplification — is the defence bureaucrats have gone nuts with nelicopters. their wish lists for equipping the new nava Eurocopter's basic claim — at the risk

have trouble staying airborne Eurocopter and Sikorsky choppers would cations require so much gadgetry on board, with so much enter meight, the One insider told us the current specifi-

ant has no such problems. Instead, it has a hurdle of a different sort. The larger and more powerful Cormor-

by Chretien's incoming Liberal government. helicopters ordered by Kim Campbell's Tory government in 1993 — the ones cancelled that year as an election gimmick The Italian-British Cormorant is the same make as the 43

15 new search-and-rescue choppers in 1998. cellation fees, the military again chose the Cormorant for its After taxpayers shelled out more than \$500 million in can-

order for Cormorants with 28 new Cormorant navy helicopcrowd would like to avoid. ters is obviously one political embarrassment Chretien's The prospect of now filling the rest of the cancelled Tory

into all-out war at National Defence headquarters this week In fact, sources tell us that pressure from on high erupted

ments to include Eurocopter and Sikorsky, or look for new program were simply ordered to "dumb down" the require-Apparently, senior managers in charge of the helicopter

impression with U.S. military consultants. If nothing else, all of this is certain to leave a lasting Twenty-one years and a billion bucks for what?

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